Anatolian Synagogues

MİLİ MİTRANİ · ERSİN ALOK



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EMİLİ MİTRANİ
ERSİN ALOK

Photographs by Ersin Alok

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Anatolian Synagogues

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In memoriam

HENRİ EDOUARD

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FOREWORD

This book has been prepared to present a culture, which was and is still being shared in the land called Anatolia.

Art is the product of culture and mind; but it also has a specific aspect of its own. And this is form.

The renowned art historian Heinrich Wöfflin says: "Men do not ever approach art with the same view, because they perceive what they see as they desire to see it, and then create it..."

This idea determines the formation of cultures.

The great artistic styles which we find in the main concepts of art history, show us that each period has seen the world with a different view and had to create a different language of form to express and convey what was seen.

If the concept expressed as "Get to know the man, then you will get to understand his art" is a basic principle of art history, then I want to remind you that this book,which is ranged in the context of researches of Anatolian Synagogues, has been prepared with the main idea of bringing into light the authentic phenomena of these buildings.

I recognize the essence, the form, the aesthetic care in the artistic structure of the Jewish religion,established in Anatolia long before Christ, and I conceive that the formation of this artistic structure has a very important place in defining the varied culture of this land where we trace life since prehistorical ages.

I believe that human history will gain new dimensions and new cultures through the appreciation of every artistic phenomenon.

We can see these Anatolian Synagogues, some dating back to the 1800s, have survived to our day. What we observe is a structural whole formed by the art trend defined as "Archaeological Classicism". "Archaeological Classicism" is a part of the theoretical interest shown to the Classical Antique Age oriented directly to the ancient Greek and Roman art.

The exterior structures of Anatolian Synagogues are very plain, in harmony and visual integrity with their surroundings even to the degree of being unnoticeable.

However, the interior is very different. The entrance prepares you for an unexpected greatness which you will face.

Everything has been taken from the essence of life. The formal fantasies have been specialized in general. The individual is never left all alone; and thus structures and shapes have been formed as to share the whole in communal life. Consequently, a concept of integrity which presents itself in form, has been created. This has the psychological effect of removing the importance of the social status image, and replacing it with the power of social unity.

Since the buildings were structured within the frame of this concept, they were not shaped in discrete forms; but the Scholastic approach has been displayed in definite points.

Anatolian Synagogues are grouped in three regions:

The first group is the Thracian Synagogues.

The second group covers the Western and Central Anatolian Synagogues.

And to the third group belong the Southeastern and Eastern Anatolian Synagogues.

The construction plans display triplet systems. The general characteristic is to have a central space and two spreading centers connected to the main one.

The "Ehal" is the point where this flow of action meets. The architectural structure is built on this basis.

All decorations are absorbed in the whole. Although the embroideries and embellishments of the "Parohets" give the impression of being independent of the architectural integrity, they are nevertheless the most spiritual elements of the synagogues. They reflect the specific characteristic of art, which is a product of culture and mind, in other words, they reflect the essence of art which is the form of the content. Thus we meet with artistic formations displaying sincere feelings. The "Parohets" have a special significance in Anatolian Synagogues.

The most significant characteristic of the synagogues is the presence of the Torah Rolls. They show regional differences. The artists of the region have sacrificingly prepared the ''Rimonnims''. It is possible to see all the characteristics of the regional culture on each Rimonnim . Particularly, the Rimonnims in İzmir, Bursa and their surroundings are real works of art which deserve attention.

Anatolian Synagogues, with their particular structures, have contributed to the formation of the impressive Anatolian culture as a whole. They have kept the Myth which Man has created through history, on their own soil; they have enabled the formation of a different culture entering into Anatolia from Mesopotamia; and they have furthermore provided the activity of economic function throughout the centuries.

The other immigration flows from Europe and Thracia brought the Western cultures to Anatolia; and through all those influences Anatolia gained a new dimension in history.

ERSİN ALOK

A GENERAL VIEW OF THE ANATOLIAN AND THRACIAN JEWS

Although there is no definite data reflecting exactly when the Jews arrived on the Anatolian peninsula, it is known that the people in Palestine migrated to Anatolia and the **Balkans due** *to various reasons, before the collapse of the Second Temple (70 A.D.) and started to settle in the large towns of the Roman Empire. Some ruins, unearthed during the archaeological excavations in the Aegean region (e.g. Sardes), display information and documents related to Jews who lived in that area in the 4th century B.C.*

The Jews who lived in the Roman Empire, had to pay a "Jewry Tax" of 2 Drahmis per person every year.

When Emperor Constantinus came to Byzantium, he at first tolerated the Jewish community who had long ago settled in the town, and their synagogues; and he permitted them to carry on their services on the conditions they not build new synagogues and of pay a certain tax. Upon the pressure of the Roman Church, Constantinus hardened his attitude against the Jews, and ordered them to work on Saturdays and on the Passover Feast in order to bake bread for the Roman soldiers. This continued until the Roman Empire was divided as the empires of Rome and Byzantium. The Jews suffered deeply from working on their sacred days.

The status of the Jews was not better either during the period between 395 A.D. and The Conquest of Istanbul. When Theodosius II was enthroned in 408 A.D., he forbade the Jews to celebrate the Purim Feast and to build new synagogues, on the pretext that they insulted Christianity.

Upon the Jewish resistance and opposition, Theodosius II ordered the destruction of all the synagogues.

Theodosius recognized Judaism as a religion in 423 A.D. and returned the Jewish rights on condition of nonaggression against Christianity. But the Jews were again denounced as the enemies of the Roman Law in 438 and the old prohibition Act was once again put into force. Those conflicts continued until the Conquest of İstanbul.

When Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror conquered İstanbul in 1453, Jews were living on both banks of the Golden Horn. The Conqueror granted the Jews their religious freedom, and permitted the repair and restoration of the existing synagogues and the transformation of houses into synagogues since building new ones was prohibited.

When the Jews who were expelled from Spain in 1492 came to the Ottoman Empire, they built their first communities in Salonica, Edirne and İstanbul. With the addition of the Sephardims to the existing large Jewish community, the Jewish population in Istanbul exceeded thirty thousand, thus making the city the most important Jewish center of Europe.

In addition to the Byzantine Jews living in the Eminönü, Bahçekapı and Yeni Cami areas and to the Jews invited and settled in Hasköy by Sultan Mehmet II; the firman (decree) of Sultan Beyazıd II, ordering the settlement of the Sephardims in Balat, increased the Jewish population. In time, the Jews started to spread along the opposite banks of the Bosphorous.

The Turkish Jews,whose population reached sixty thousand in the early 20th century, formed large communities in the main cities of Turkey. But as a result of the migrations abroad caused by the World Wars and the foundation of the Israeli State, and of the rural flow the metropolis, the present day Turkish Jewish population has decreased to negligible numbers in towns other than Istanbul and İzmir. Today they can hardly carry on their religious traditions.

THE ORIGIN OF THE WORD "JEW"

The word "Jew" originates from the name of the Kingdom of "Judaea" comprising two of the 12 Israeli tribes. The name "Israel" stands for the Northern Kingdom where all Israelites, and particularly the 10 tribes lived. Today it is used as the common name for Jewry and the Jewish country since 1948. It is mentioned as Hebrew in the Torah, whereas the present usage of Hebrew expresses only the spoken and written language of Israel.

WHAT IS A "SYNAGOGUE"?

Synagogue is the name of the building where the Jews gather to worship and to receive religious education. The word is derived from the Latin "senat" meaning the "meeting place".

It is the focal point in the life of the Jewish community.

In antiquity, all synagogues, including the Great Temple (BEIT HA MIGDASH) in Jerusalem, were known as places of prayer and worship to God. Although there are many assumptions, it is nevertheless unknown when and how the first synagogue was built. However, we know that there were synagogues in Egypt and Palestine in the 3rd century B.C. It is also said that there were the synagogues of Hamama in Tunisia and Duraeropos in Syria. The synagogues in Palestine and Diaspora were the gathering places for the Jews, even long before the collapse of the Great Temple.

Besides administering the synagogues, the rabbis also tried to raise a unified, educated and cultured Jewish community.

The present day synagogues have religious classes, pastime spaces and offices. They are run by the rabbis or specially trained guides or by both.

In these unifying worship halls, the Torah and the related commentaries are read to the community from the pulpit, called the "Bimha" or the "Teva".

THE ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ANATOLIAN SYNAGOGUES

The Jews living in various parts of Turkey, moved in time to large cities or to new districts in their towns and built new temples there. Some of the deserted synagogues were dilapidated or burnt down, and some lost their authentic purpose of usage. On the other hand, some of those old synagogues have been restored and put into service, particularly on Saturdays and holidays.

The synagogues are usually surrounded by high walls in order to preserve their secrecy. They have a courtyard in front, with enough space to build a "Suka" and sometimes a religious school. Most of the synagogues were built of stone or brickdust-and-lime mortar (Horasan), and their roofs were made of wood. A few of the extant ones (e.g. the Castoria Synagogue in Balat, İstanbul) are completely wooden.

The interiors of the synagogues display differences. Some are rectangular, some have the "Teva" in the center and some have their "Teva" at the foot of the back wall. Some Tevas are large and some are small as portable pulpits.

It seems that a local type of synagogue architecture was developed in the İzmir and Bursa areas. Usually, the four central columns supporting the roof divide the ceiling into nine equal squares. The ''Teva'' is situated right below the central square among the four columns. The ceiling is decorated with wooden and plaster ornaments. The embellishments above the ''Teva'' are usually richer. The columns, ceilings and walls are decorated with geometrical and floral designs, and in some instances they have landscapes painted on them. The seat rows of the worshippers are along the synagogue walls and around the ''Teva''.

The Jews formed separate communities in their respective towns during the 15th and 16th centuries, and since each had its own tradition of worship, they built separate synagogues. It is not certain whether or not those synagogues had architectural differences.

But the differences between the communities were removed between the 17th and 19th centuries, and new synagogues were built. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Italian architectural style became the influential factor in the synagogue architecture.



Ankara Synagogue







The Hittite town of Akuva is, according to some sources, the town of Ankara. The town was first built during the period of the Lycians and Phrygians. Later on, the town grew and was developed during the period of the Galatians, and was called Galatia. The Persians, and then Alexander the Great captured Ankara. Antiokhos III (242-187 B.C.) brought nearly two thousand Jews to Central Anatolia from Mesopotamia and the neighbouring areas in the 2nd century B.C.





The Roman Emperor Augustus (63 B.C.-14 A.D.) had a decree inscribed on a bronze column in the Augustus Temple in Ankara, stating the rights granted to the Jews, and stating that the Jews were not to be prevented from sending donations (Shekel) to the Great Temple in Jerusalem, that they were not to be called to Courts on Shabat days and that their sacred properties were to be respected. St. Paul came to Ankara, and he had the St. Paul Church, which was erect until late in the 19th century, built in present day Keçiören which was then known as the Jewish district.



View of the "Ehal" gate from the interior.



The raids during the Byzantine Empire, prevented the development of the town. The Jews were faced with the compulsion of speaking the language of the Byzantines, and were forced even to pray in that language.

There still was a small Jewish community in Ankara in the 9th century. This community traded in cereals, sheep and goat wool and spices, and was economically dominant in the Galatian trade.


שמן זית זך

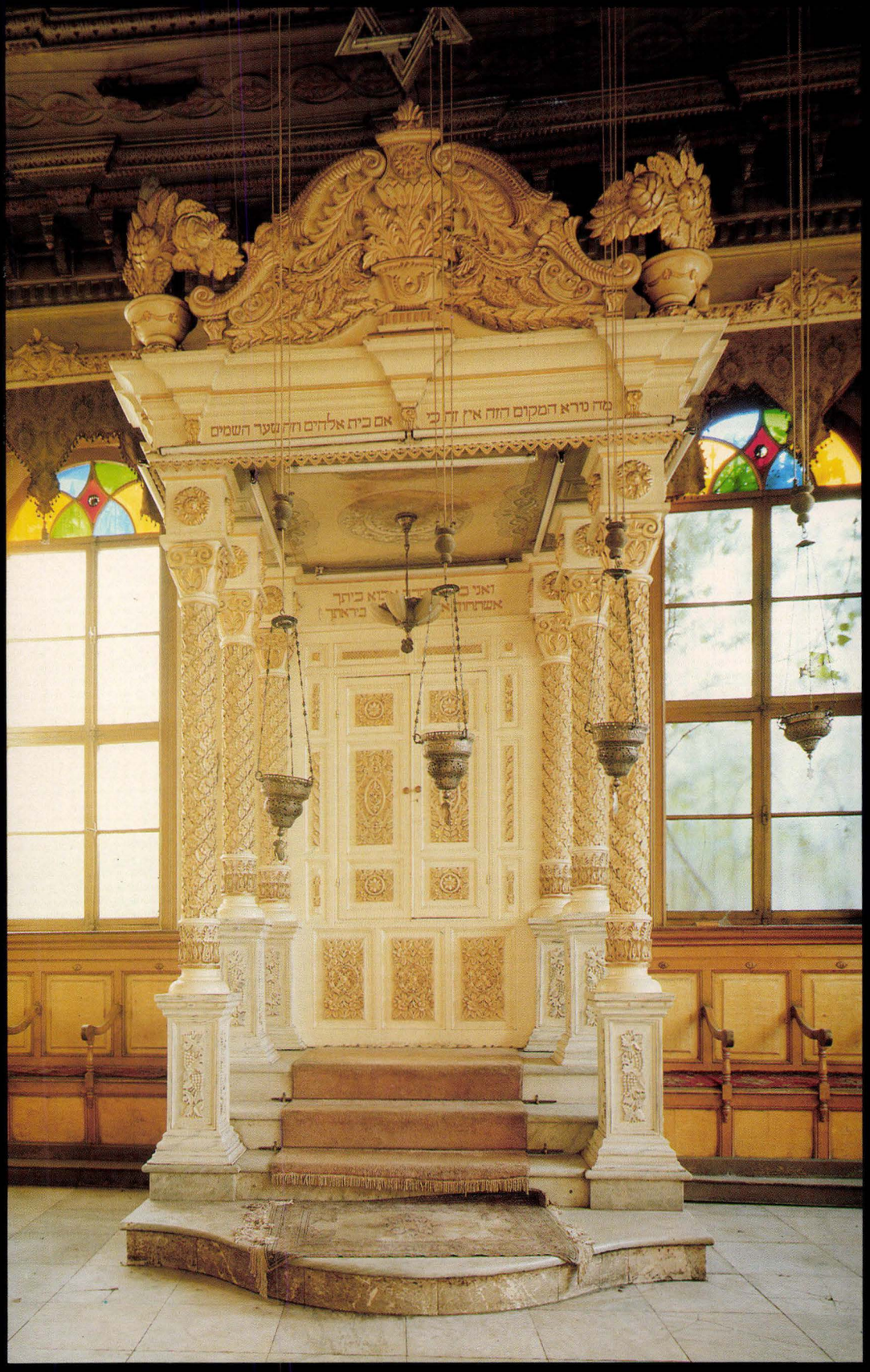


During the Ottoman Empire, the conquest of Ankara in 1346 by Sultan Murad I freed the Jews from the Byzantine oppression. Sultan Murad I sent a group of Jews fluent in Turkish to Edirne in order to provide to the Jews in Edirne the opportunity of learning Turkish.

The Jews who later came to the Ottoman Empire from France, Spain, Portugal and Germany, were not assimilated with the Jews of Portugese and Spanish origin living in Ankara. The Portugese and Spanish newcomers each built their own synagogues in addition to the existing one. Those three synagogues were built next to the Jewish district. A hundred years later, the Portugese Jews were assimilated particularly with the Turkish Jews.



Ankara, which was an important trade center during the 15th and 16th centuries, lost its importance due to the new trade routes built south of it. Consequently, the economical crisis led the Jewish community to shut itself off from the active life style.



View of the "Ehal".



Following the collapse of the three synagogues in the Jewish district in the 18th century, the still extant synagogue in Ankara was built in 1840 and it was repaired in 1843. As a consequence of the convenience created by the Ankara-İstanbul railway which was built in 1892 and passed near the synagogue, two schools were built there. Those schools, one of which was for boys and the other for girls, are not erect today. As a result of the great drought suffered in Ankara and its vicinity during the 19th century, the Ankara Jews left the city. The Ankara synagogue was restored in 1907 by an Italian architect.

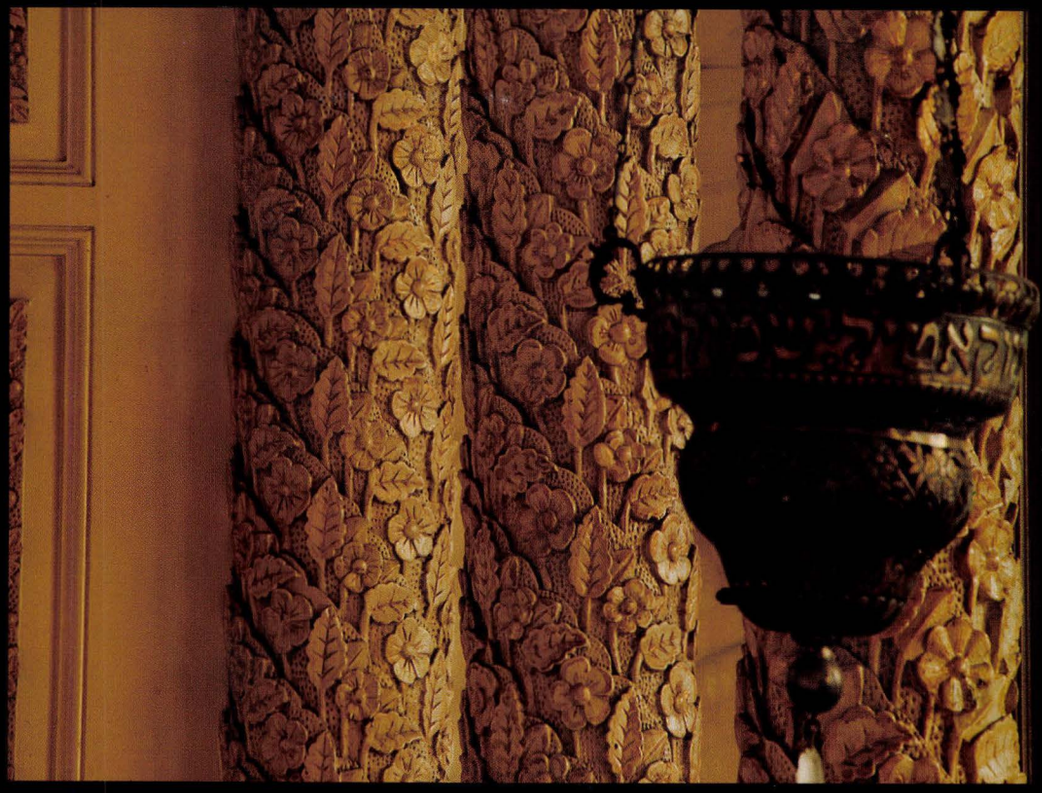




There were nearly 100 Jewish families in Ankara during the fifties. The Jews who used to live in the district of Samanpazarı, in the center of the old town, and in the neighborhood of the synagogue, moved to modern districts when the new city was developed.



Cohen's symbol on the lamp.







The synagogue was kept in service without requiring much effort until the seventies. But after that, the migrations from Ankara, and consequently the population decrease, created hardships for the synagogue, where even Shabat service could hardly be held. Now there are 35 Jewish families in Ankara. But none of them live near the synagogue which is of high value from the point of Turkish Jewish culture. Many of the stained glass panels with historical value are broken. And there are torn down parts on the rarely found, hand-decorated 500 square meter ceiling. This building, unique among the Anatolian synagogues with its historical and architectural characteristics, is one of the most important buildings in the world from the point of History of Art.







The Teva'' and symbols of Fertility.





View of the ceiling




ספר שני
זכור את
שבת את



Torah Rolls.



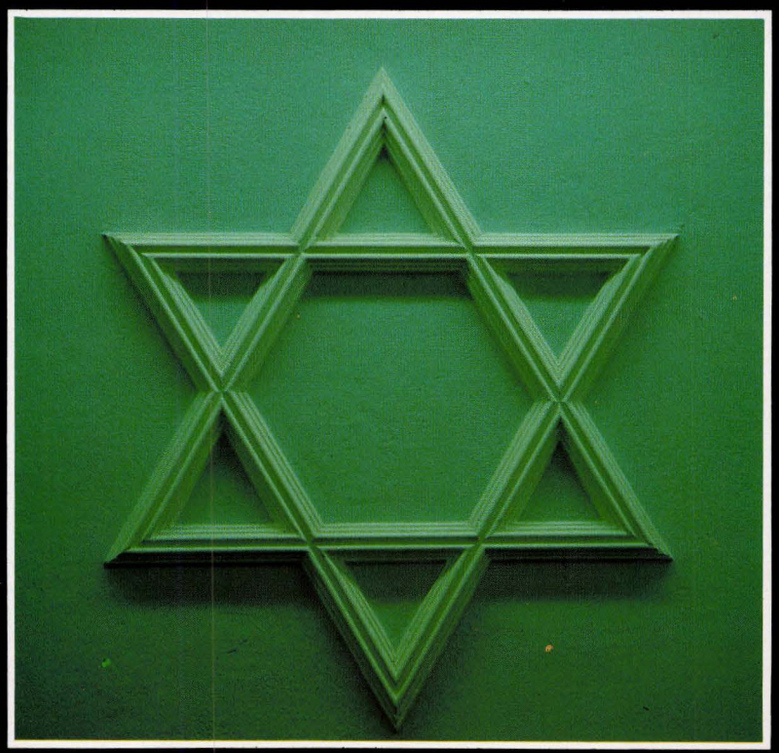
Entrance to the "Midrash" from the synagogue courtyard.



Fountain.



The "Midrash" next to the synagogue.



Adana Synagogue



View of the "Ehal" from the "Teva".





View of the "Ehal" from the "Teva".



Adana and Tarsus were part of Cilicia, which was one of the Jewish settlements in old ages. There was an organised Jewish community and a synagogue in Adana in the 6th century. The Jews spread all over Cicilia in the 4th century, paid taxes to the Patriarchate, and the synagogues were run by a separate organization.



View of the "Parohet".

The Jews continued to live in Cilicia during the Seljuk period. The Jews coming to Adana from various parts of Turkey in the 19th century, settled there and were occupied with trade. The economic status of the Adana Jewish community was well established. All the Jews who settled in Adana after the First World War were in the textile business.



A "Menorah" on the "Parohet".

Today there are only 13 families in Adana. They have restored the old synagogue, and they hold religious service on Shabat days and Feasts.



Antakya Synagogue



Entrance of the Antakya Synagogue.

Hatay and its vicinity are among the most ancient settlement centers of Anatolia. The mild climate and the fertile soil of the area were the main reasons for settling there as far back as the mid-Paleolithic age, circa 100,000 B.C. Another characteristic of the area which makes it an attractive settlement place where people migrated to throughout history, is the fact that it is on the crossing point of the roads connecting Anatolia to Syria and Palestine via the Çukurova plains. Furthermore, the most convenient harbours enabling Mesopotamia to open to the Mediterranean are in this region. Antakya was founded under the name of Antiocheva by the Seleukeians in late 4th century B.C. and then the Arabs called in Antakiye. The Acadians lived here in the third millenium B.C., and the Hurris in the second millenium. The area was seized by the Hittites in the 17th century B.C. and later by the Assyrians and Persians. When Alexander the Great conquered the Persian Empire in 333 B.C., the imperial land was shared among his four commanders after his death. Seleukos Nicator I , the most powerful of these four, won over Antigonos in 312 B.C. and founded the Seleukeia state. Antakya town (Antiokheia) was founded by Seleukos Nikator between 305-300 B.C. in the name of his son Antiokhos. Antiokheia developed in a short time and became the capital of the Seleukeia state.



View of the "Ehal".

Since the time of the Hittites, Antakya has been a town through which very important trade routes pass. As a consequence of this characteristic, the town was under continous attacks from Iran, Egypt and Rome who were the powerful states of the Antique Age.



General view.



After Christ's crucifixion St. Paul came to Antakya and tried to spread Christianity here. The name Christian was first used here and the first Christian church was built here. Therefore the Pope declared in 1963 that Antakya is a place of pilgrimage. When the Roman Empire was divided into two in 395, Antakya became a part of Eastern Rome. During this period, the town often and alternately was seized by the Byzantines and the Arabs. The town which was the scene of continuous battles, was ruined as a consequence of 6 great earthquakes and 2 great fires, and then came under the rule of the Seljuks, the Crusaders, the Mamluks respectively and was finally annexed to the Ottoman Empire in 1517 by Sultan Selim I.



General view.



Antakya was occupied by the English for a short while after the First World War, and then was left to the French. They ruled the area until 1938 in accordance with the Ankara Treaty of 1921, as an autonomous state under the name of İskenderun Province annexed to Syria. France founded the Hatay State in 1938 under Turkey's guarantorship, and upon the plebiscite of 1939 ruling annexation to Turkey, the town became a part of the Turkish Republic. Due to the fact that Antakya is on the crossroads of Syria, Palestine and Anatolia, the history of the Antakya Jews began with the migration flows into this region. The Jews had a life of wellfare in Antakya and its surroundings and they dominated the trade in the region. But the settlement of the Roman Christians in Antakya and the events starting with the rapid spread of Christianity greatly disturbed the Jews; and while some of them converted to Christianity, many left the area.



Torah rolls in the "Ehal".



During the Byzantine period, the Jewish-Christian conflicts continued and from time to time their fights grew so serious as to cause the firing and pulling down of the Jewish districts. Antakya, which came under Arabian rule in 629 A.D, suffered greatly during the Crusades. Consequently, many Jews migrated from Antakya and the Jewish population of the town gradually dropped. There were 200 Jewish families in Antakya before the First World War. They were a branch of the Jewish community in Aleppo. They had a synagogue, a Talmud-Torah (religious school), a cemetery and a social association. Apart from a few very rich wholesalers, the majority of the Antakya Jews were men of guilds. Following Antakya's annexation to Syria after the war, a limited Jewish migration from Aleppo was realized; but some of those families returned to Aleppo when Antakya was reannexed to Turkey.

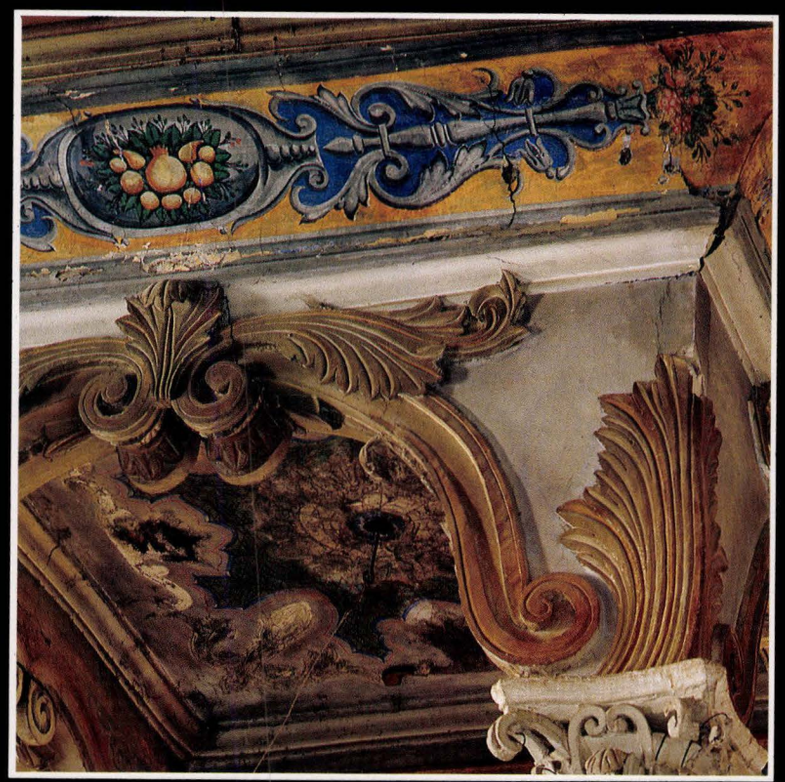


General view of the "Ehal".



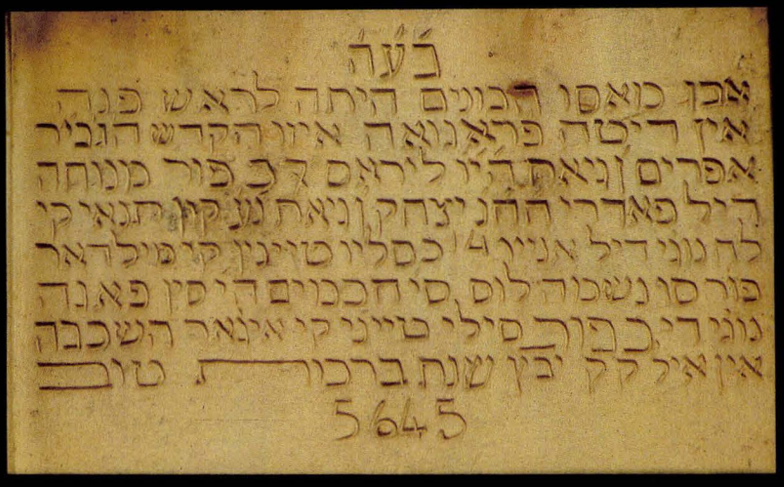


The Jewish population in Antakya dropped in time, due to migration to big cities because of economic reasons. The remaining Jews, nevertheless try to persevere with their tradition and continue their worshipping ceremonies.



Bergama Synagogue





Bergama or Pergamon as it was anciently called, was a small town of the Lydian Kingdom before the Persian invasion. The historical information about Bergama goes back only to the post-Hellenistic period. Bergama, which went under various invasions like most Anatolian towns, had a Jewish community among its inhabitants. A Jewish delegation sent to Rome on diplomatic mission, by Hyrcan, the father of Syrian King Antiochos, passed along the Aegean coast on their return trip and stopped at Bergama to meet the Jewish community and inform them of some decisions by the Roman Senate in favour of the Jews. Based on this knowledge, we can talk of the existence of an organized Jewish community in Bergama during the 3rd-2nd centuries B.C.



Like the other Jewish communities in various parts of Anatolia, the Bergama Jews used to collect money for the Great Temple in Jerusalem and send it there.

Bergama has no Jewish population today; but there were 300 families in the town during 1800s and nearly 120 families in the early 1900s; the population dropped to 150-200 persons in 1927.

The Talmud Torah in Bergama was changed into a school for boys and girls in 1898. This school was in the courtyard of the synagogue. When the number of the Jews in Bergama decreased after 1925, the maintenance of the school became very difficult due to economic hardships and consequently the school was closed.

Bergama synagogue which is now in ruins, was built in 1862 on the site of the former synagogue. There are no documents or registrars related to the former synagogue. It very probably was ruined or seriously damaged during the earthquake in 1896. That synagogue which had been rebuilt and restored, was quite large. Its ceiling decorations are still intact. Its Teva is in the center of the building and is surrounded by four marble columns.

The Parohet on the Ehal door is made of white wool with a mosque motif on it.

The only remaining parts of the Bergama Synagogue are the ceiling, the Teva and four columns around it.



Bursa Geroush Synagogue



Entrance of the Synagogue.



View of the "Ehal".



The "Teva".

We know that a Jewish community lived in Bursa, which was a part of Bithynia, in 79 B.C. And the Hebrew inscriptions on the ruins found at the location of Zindan Kapısı in the Muradiye district, show that the Jews were established there in the 9th century.



View of the "Teva" and the "Ehal".



General view.



When the Germans captured Sarajevo and started to attack Scopia in 1689, the Jews in Scopia took refuge in İstanbul and most of them later settled in Bursa.



View of the dome from the "Teva".

The dome of the Geroush synagogue rests on 8 columns. Its large Teva is reached by two opposite stairs. It further has a small Dansa- "Small Teva". The dome is richly decorated.



Centerpiece of the dome.



The Jewish population in Bursa was around 3500 before the First World War. According to the 1927 statistics, this number was down to 1800, but it reached nearly 2400 four years later. The Jews in Bursa always lived in the same district and had three synagogues next to each other. Only one of those three synagogues is extant and is still in service today. Etz-Ha-Haim is known to be the oldest of these three synagogues. This synagogue, which was built upon a firman(decree)by Sultan Orhan, displays a dominant influence of the Ottoman architectural style. The Jews' request to be allowed to live in a separate district in order to carry on their traditions and customs, was submitted to Sultan Orhan; and he assigned them the place of their choice. The Jews could settle at the places of their preference not only in Bursa, but everywhere in the country as well. Today there is a refrigerator repair shop on the spot of the Etz-Ha-Haim synagogue.



The "Parohet".



The "Menorah" on the "Parohet".



In accordance with the local Jewish tradition, a large unleavened bread loaf is placed, at a point where everyone can see it, on the Feast of Passover and it stays in the synagogue all year through. Today the number of the Jewish community in Bursa is 120.

Torah rolls.





The "Rimonnims"

Symbol of the Universe.

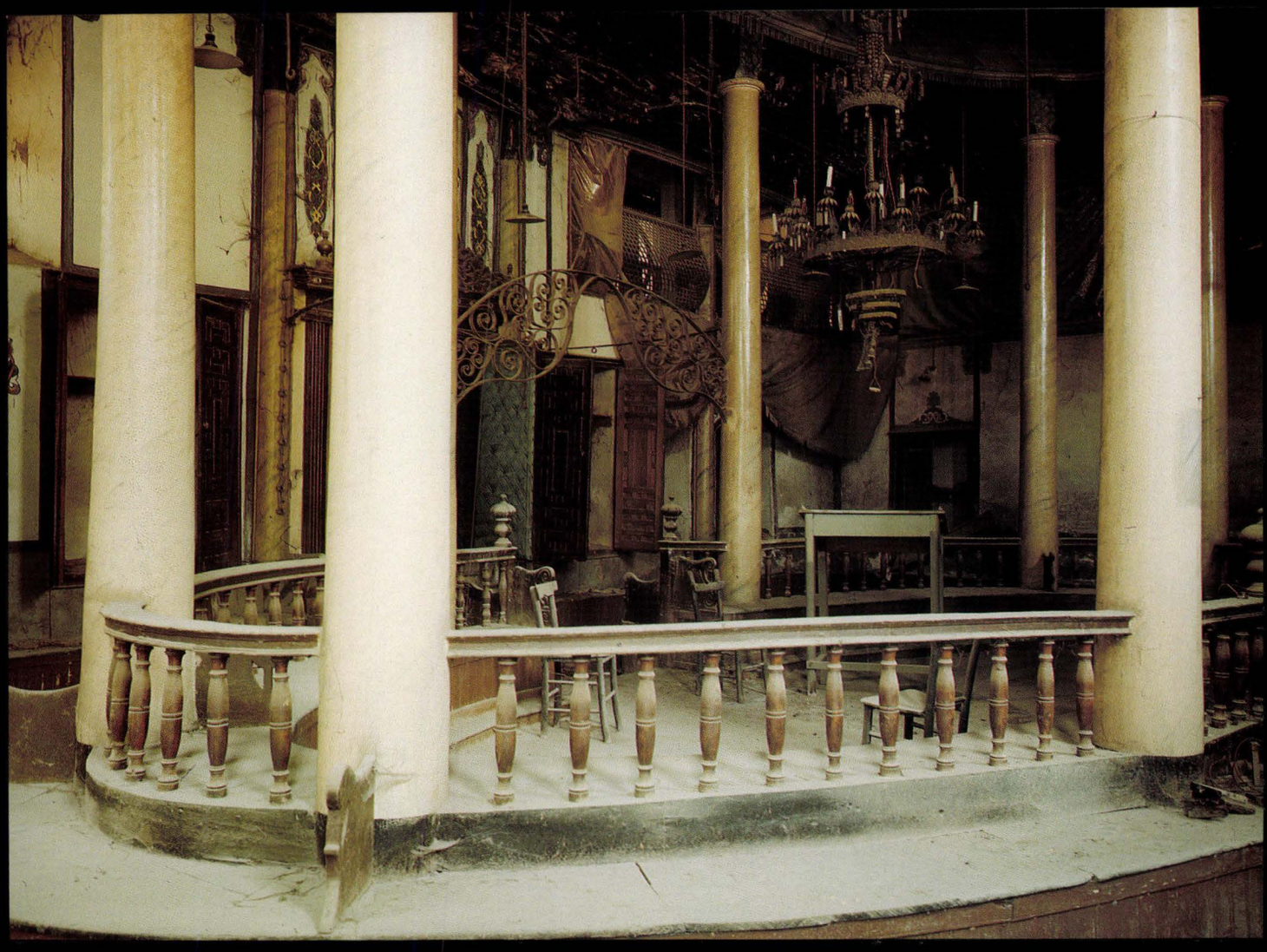


Bursa Mayor Synagogue



Entrance of the Synagogue.



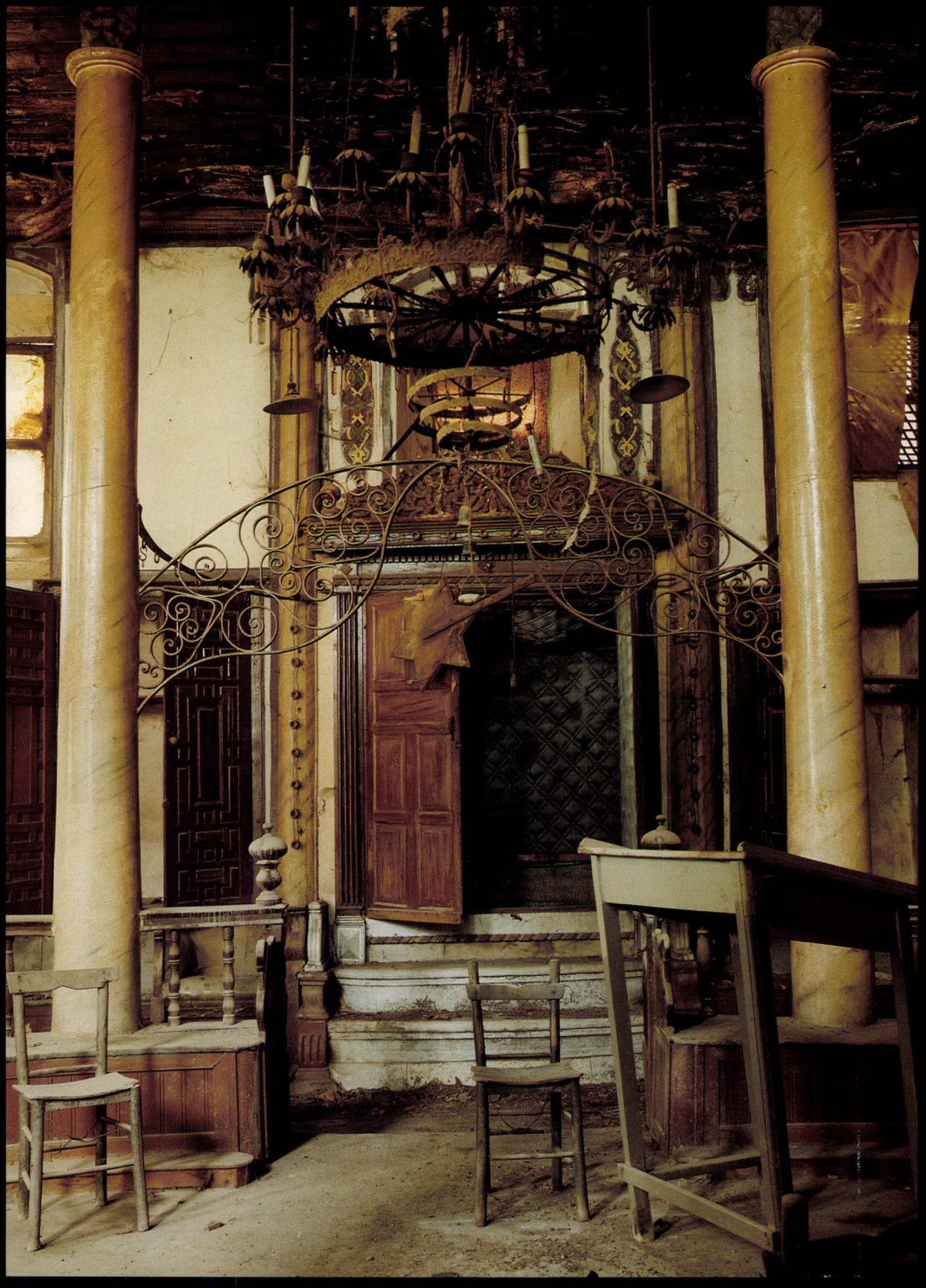


The oval form of the "Mayor".

The Mayor synagogue has a fine, large Teva reached by steps and a small Dansa. There is a beautiful Parohet with Hebrew inscriptions on the Ehal (the closet where the sacred Books are kept). This synagogue is no longer in service, due to the population decrease of the community and due to its economic straits.



View from the "Teva".



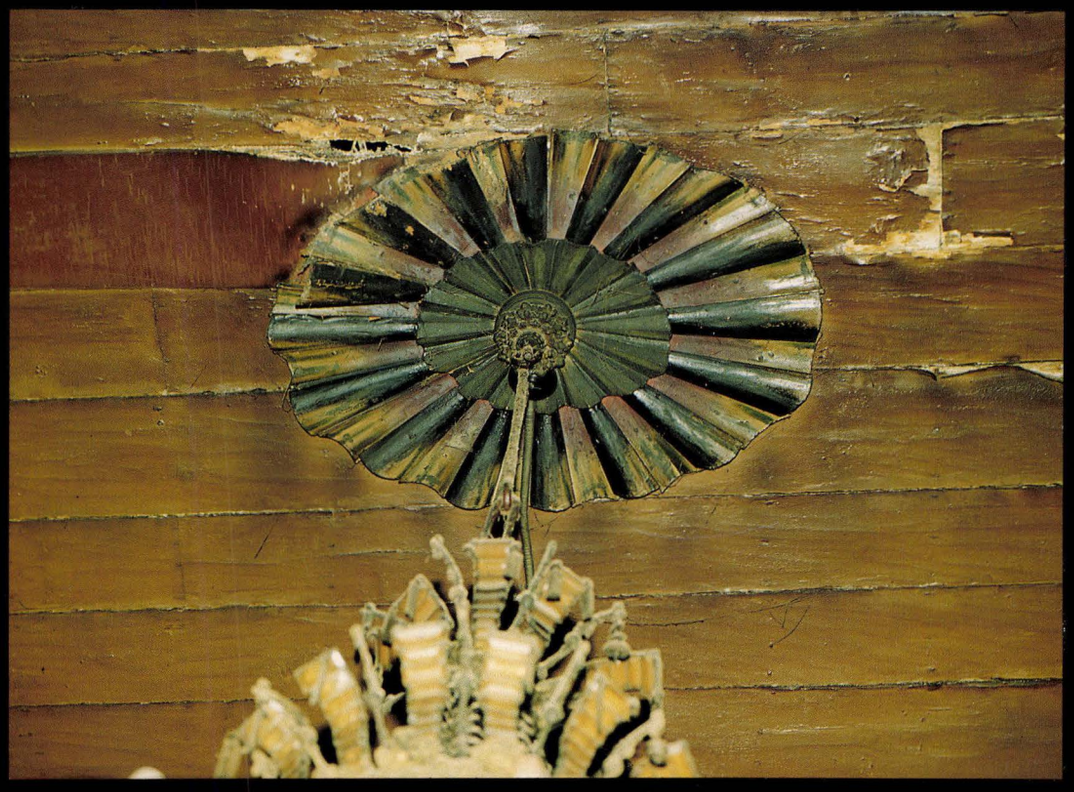
The door of the "Ehal".



Stairway to the second floor.



Banisters.



Centerpiece of the ceiling.



Adornments on the niche.

Adornments on the niche.



Wall decorations.



The "Ehal".



Chandelier.



Çanakkale Synagogue



General view

The first records related to the Çanakkale Jews go back to the 12th century. But the roots of the established community lie in the Sephardims from Spain who took refuge in Anatolia 500 years ago.



View of the "Ehal" door from the "Teva".



General view of the interior and the "Teva".



The Çanakkale Jews started to gain importance in the history of the Turkish Jews, during the second half of the 17th century. At that time, the pseudo Messiah Sabetay Sevi was imprisoned on the order of Sultan Mehmet IV, in Kumkale (Abidos). This event caused numerous visits to the castle by Jews from Holland, Poland, Germany and Italy. And the Çanakkale Jews thus built relations with the outside world.

There were 50 Jewish families living in Çanakkale during the second half of the 18th century. According to the records, a hundred years later, the Jewish population had risen to 3000 in 1876.



The standard of life of the Çanakkale Jews was at its highest level in the 18th century. Their fluency in foreign languages enabled them to get into contact with the foreign ships coming into the harbour, and consequently gain an important place in the trade of the city. The population of Çanakkale greatly dropped in the early 20th century, as a result of earthquakes, wars and great fires. During the First World War, the synagogues were used as barracks, and in time they were dilapidated due to lack of care and maintenance since the Jewish community was largely reduced. One of them was turned into an asylum for the destitute, but after a while it also was destroyed.

Niche on a wall.





The Ten Commandments and "Hanukiya".

The Jewish population in Çanakkale was further reduced as a result of the migrations to İstanbul, America and Israel after the Second World War, and dropped to the present level. The Mekor Hayim synagogue is the only extant one in Çanakkale. There is no rabbi in the synagogue. Rabbis are invited from İstanbul on Feast days and for funerals; but the synagogue is always open the worshippers.





Çorlu Synagogue



Exterior view of the mosque.

The town of Çorlu, which was a Phrygian colony in Thracia during the first millenium B.C., was under Persian rule after 500 B.C. and Macedonian rule after 335 B.C.

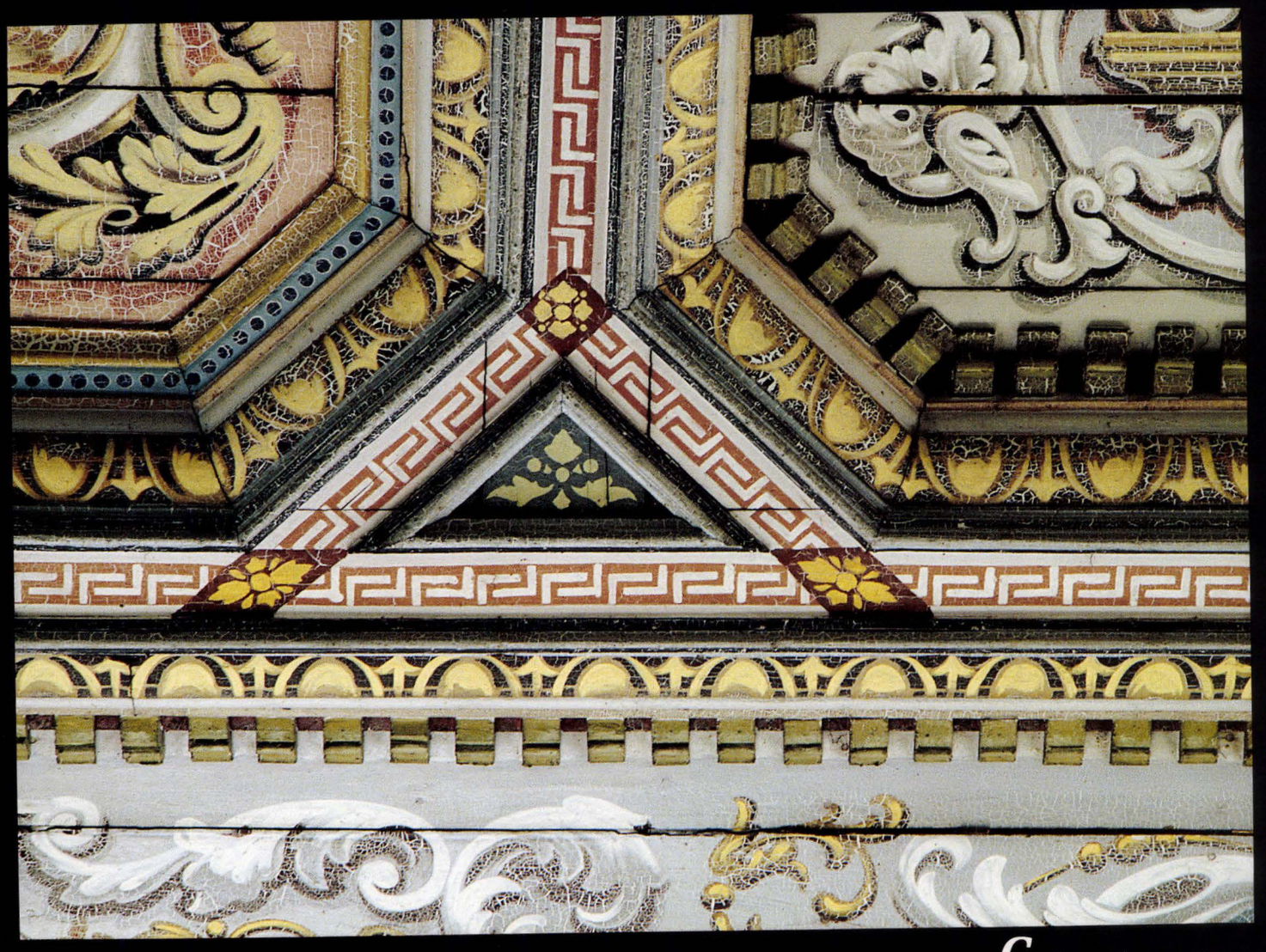


The ceiling





General view.



Ceiling decorations.

Çorlu which was annexed to the Roman Empire in 46 A.D. became a Byzantine town after the division of the Roman Empire in 395. It was called Tzurulon during the Byzantine period and was very important as a military base. It was annexed to the Ottoman Empire in 1359 by Sultan Murad I. Çorlu was occupied by the Greek army in 1920, but was regained in 1922.



Ceiling decorations.

Çorlu was always the home of a small Jewish community. They had their synagogue which was in regular service. But the Jews who suffered during various wars, gradually left the town. Today there are no Jews in Çorlu, and the synagogue has been turned into a mosque. But it has been restored in concordance with the original design, without changing the ceiling decorations and the column capitals. The former Çorlu Jews who now live abroad, come to visit the places where their ancestors lived and they freely visit the mosque as well.





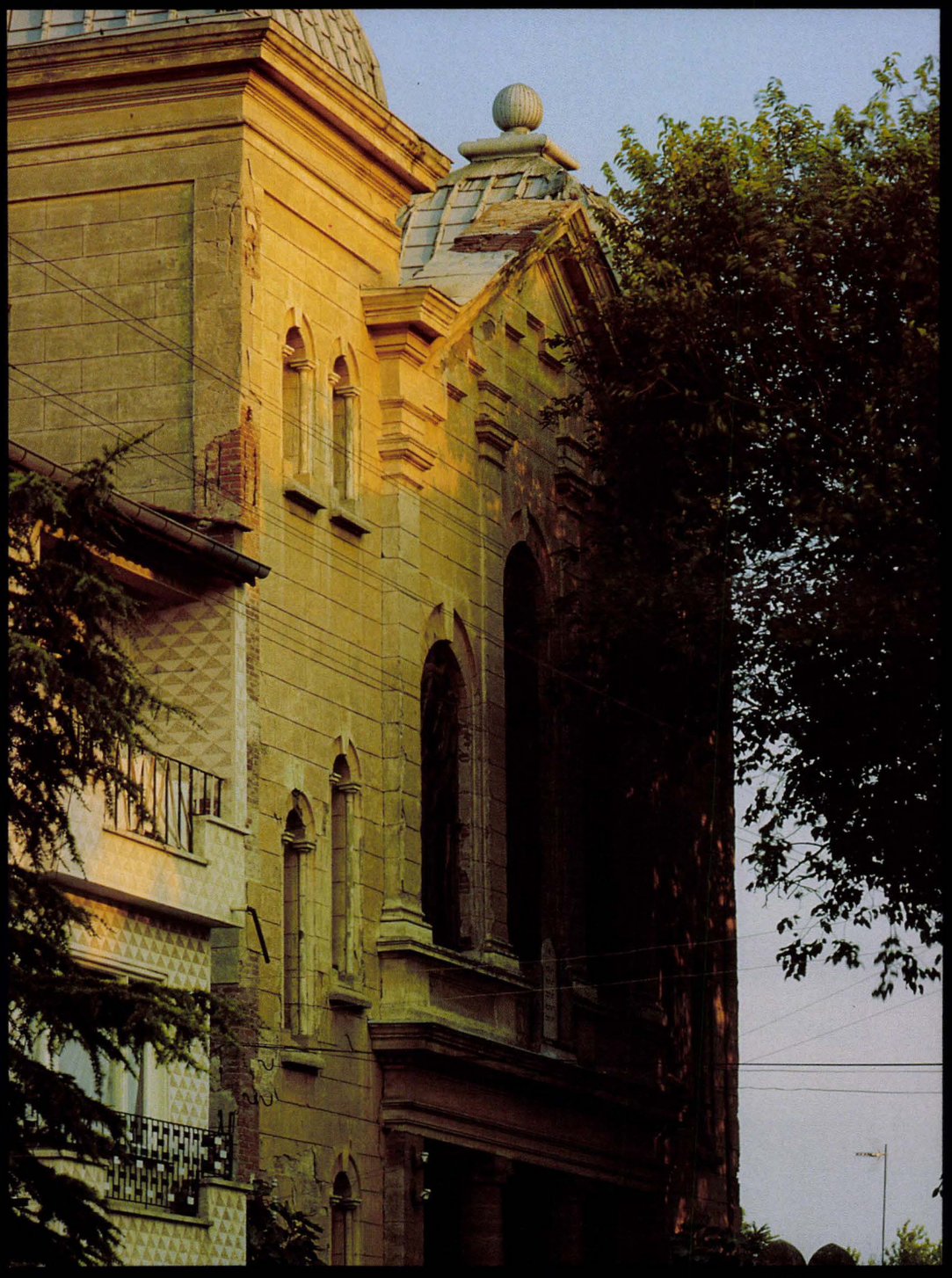
Left corner of the old "Ehal".



View of the "Ehal".



Edirne Synagogue



Exterior view.

The present Jewish population in Edirne, which has been one of the most important regional centers of settlement and culture through ages, is only 30 whereas it was once thirty thousand. The records related to Jewish settlements go back to the beginnings of the Byzantine Empire. The Jews of the Byzantine period were occupied in the textile, leather and wine trades.

The spire on the roof cuppola.



The annexation of the region to the Ottoman Empire in 1362 by Sultan Murat I, was the beginning of a peaceful life for the Jewish community, who had largely suffered from Byzantine oppression. Sultan Murat I encouraged the Jews living in other towns, to move to Edirne in order to organize the economic life of the city and teach Turkish to their coreligionists there.



The spire on the roof cuppola.



When the Jews who were expelled from Hungary and France in late 14th century settled in Edirne, the Jewish community of Edirne became one of the main communities. Following the Conquest of İstanbul, wide migrations took place from Edirne to İstanbul, thus decreasing the Jewish population of the city. But in 1492, when the Jews, fleeing from the Spanish Inquisition took refuge in the Ottoman Empire and settled in Edirne, the Jewish population rose again. In time, with the addition of the refugees from Portugal and Italy, the Jewish community in Edirne became one of the most prominent communities of Europe. Since the way of life and traditions of the newcomers were greatly different from those of the local Jews, the communities at first tried to live in accordance with their respective traditions, but gradually became assimilated.



View of the "Ehal" from the entrance.

The Jewish population which was around 12,000 in 1873, reached 17,000 in 1911 and to 28,000 after the First World War. This number was reduced to 13,000 in 1922 and to 5700 in 1927. When the German troops approached the Turkish border near Edirne during the Second World War, the government helped most of the Jews to move to İstanbul. Although some returned to Edirne after the war, the Jewish community in Edirne nevertheless lost its old prominence.



For a long time during the Ottoman period, there were two Chief Rabbis in Edirne. One of them was the leader of the Edirne community, and the second one was the community leader for the Danube Province and its towns of Ruscuk, Plevne and Burgaz. When the Ottoman Empire lost thos provinces in the flow of history, those two Chief Rabbis in Edirne and the two different communities became quite a great problem for the Jews for a long while.



View of the "Ehal" from the upper floor.

When most of the numerous synagogues in Edirne were burnt during the great fire in 1906, only a few were left. Those synagogues were named after the professions of their respective communities, since people of the same profession usually went to the same synagogue. Thus the synagogues carried names such as El Kal de los Hammales, El Kal de los Küfecis (both synagogues for porters), El Kal de los Kasapes (butchers).



Column capitals and ceiling decorations.



Ceiling decorations.



Pediment decorations over the "Ehal" door.

The great synagogue which started to be built on January 6, 1906 and which was similar to a synagogue in Vienna, was built of stone, thus surviving the fire. This synagogue, which is dilapidated now, was the largest synagogue of the Balkans and the third largest of Europe in seating capacity.



Gaziantep Synagogue



View of the synagogue from the inner courtyard.



The province of Gaziantep, and its towns Kilis and Nizip had Arab origins in their historical socio-economic formation. Before the foundation of the Turkish Republic, the Jewish community in these areas was under the leadership of the Chief Rabbinate in Aleppo. They had their own rabbis as well,one synagogue and two cemeteries.

The Jewish community in Gaziantep used to talk Arabic at home and Turkish in their business life. They were occupied with trade.



View of the "Ehal" from the "Teva".



It is thought that the Gaziantep synagogue is a temple built in the 10th century. Unlike the other synagogues, there are no prayer seats in this one. The Worshippers used to sit on the carpets or rush mats when they were praying.



The "Teva" and general view of the interior.



The dilapidated synagogue was put under the management of the Regional Management of Foundations and was recognized as a historical site in 1980. The authorities state that it should be evaluated as a touristic place and that they have gotten the necessary permit and authorization to restore the building.



View from the "Midrash".



The 'Ehal' and its door.



Honest men started to build this building

But a time came when the chieftains of the Israelite clans did not state their recognition

Instead they set our town on fire and killed our brethren

Because Moshe El Kayam was our sovereign and king

Until our Messiah arrives

And He will build our pulpit

We are grateful to that name of Excellence

The whole world should know that he is our sovereign

This building was completed in 5638.



This final resting place has been built for modest Avram Franko

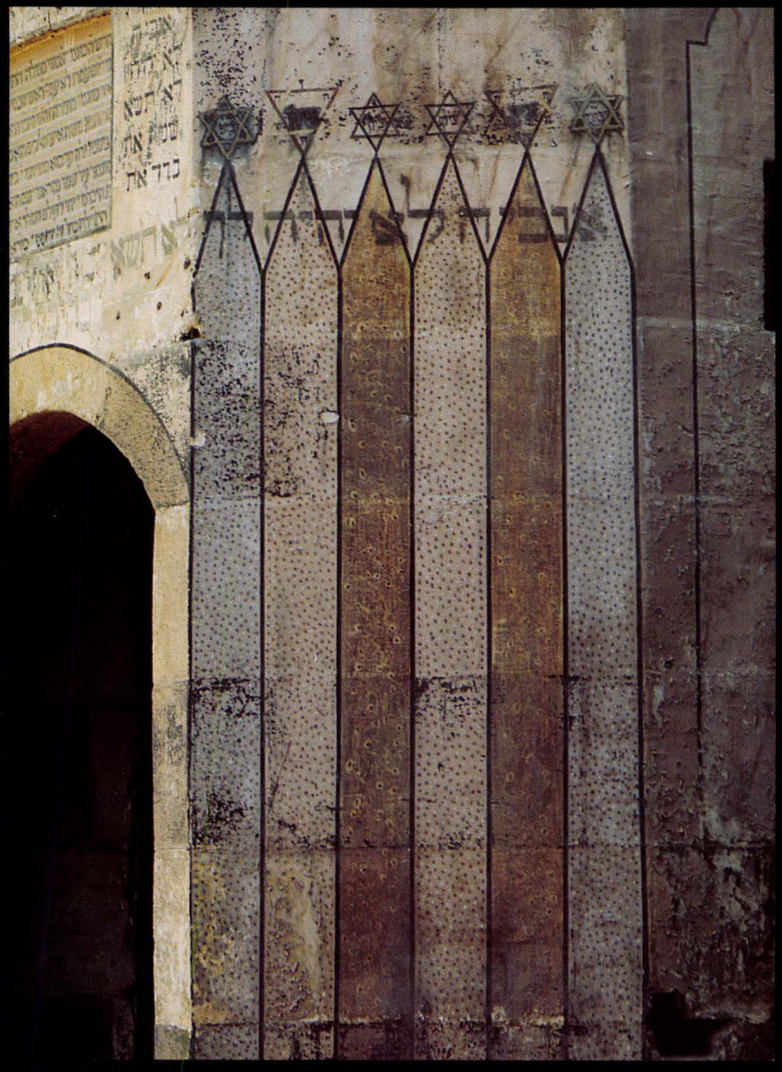
By his daughters Sinbol, Vasirine and his wife Masal

In order to raise his spirit up to Heavens

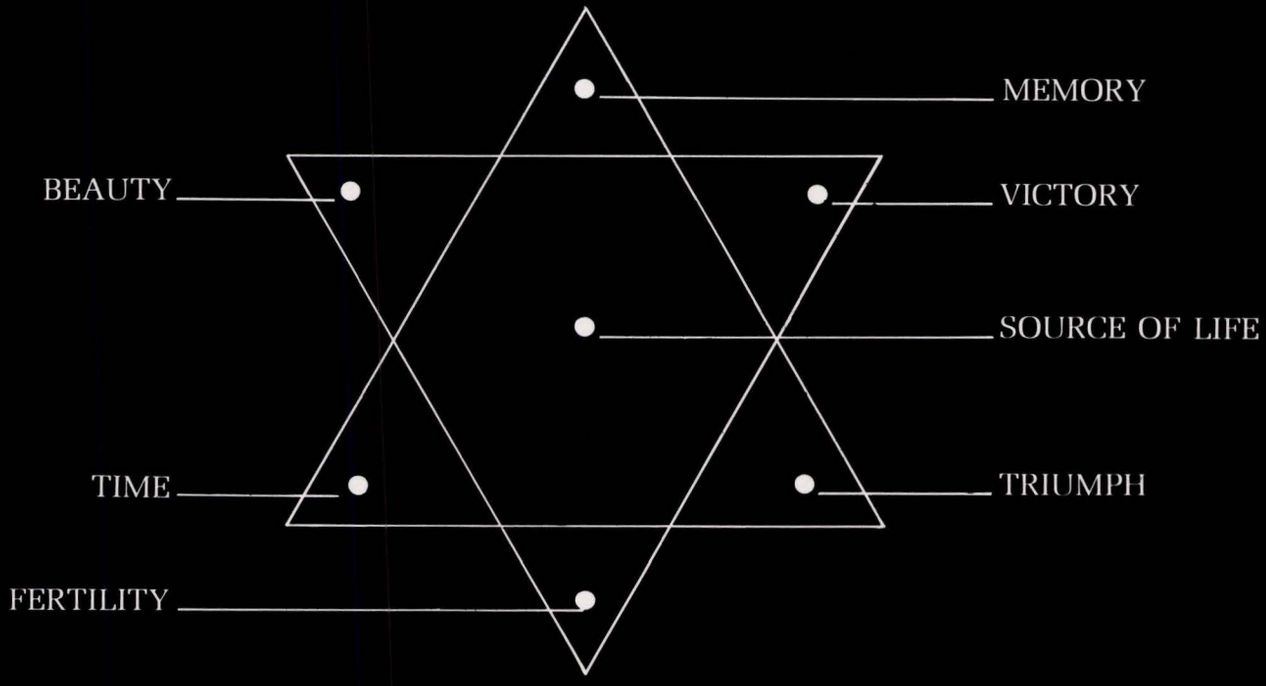
May his daughters and their husbands long live as he lies in peace 5536.

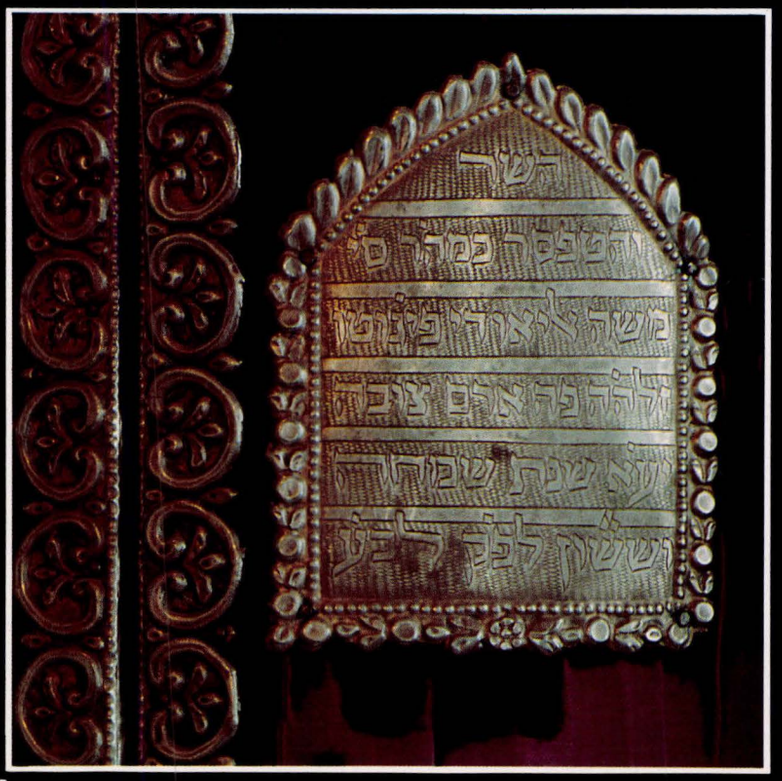

אנכי
לא יהיה
לא תשא
שמור את
כבד את


לא תרצח
לא תנאף
לא תגנוב
לא תענה
לא תחמוד






MEMORY
BEAUTY
VICTORY
SOURCE OF LIFE
TIME
TRIUMPH
FERTILITY



İskenderun Synagogue



İskenderun was founded in 302 B.C. by Antigonos, a commander of Alexander the Great. In order to distinguish it from the other towns bearing Alexander's name, this town was called Alexandretta, meaning ''small Alexandria''. The Jewish community contributed a great deal to the life of commerce in İskenderun,which is situated on the crossroads of the ''King's Road'' built by the Persian Emperor Darius. and which is furthermore a natural harbour on the coast of the Mediterranean.

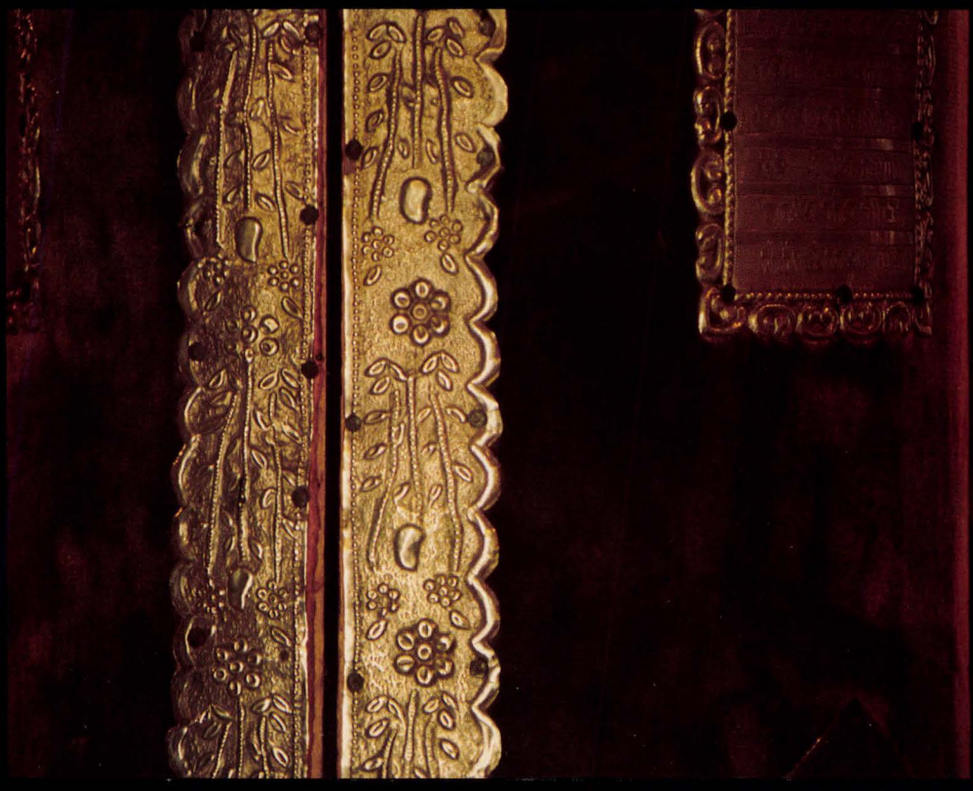
During the Middle Ages, İskenderun, just like Antakya, deeply suffered from the Crusades and could not achieve any development. Consequently the Jewish community in İskenderun had to live a secluded life.



Torah rolls.



View of the Torah rolls from the "Teva".



Torah roll cover.



The "Rimonnims".



Apart from 20 years after the First World War when it was under French rule, İskenderun has always been on Turkish soil since its annexation to the Ottoman Empire in 1485 by Sultan Beyazıd II. The Jewish community lived freely and carried on their traditions and worship without any interference. When Sabetay Sevi of İzmir declared himself as prophet in 1666 he attracted quite a number of followers from İskenderun. But when the pseudo-prophet was imprisoned upon an order of Sultan Mehmed IV, some of his followers converted to Islam in order to spare imprisonment, thus altering the number of the Jewish population in İskenderun. İskenderun where 40-60 Jewish families lived before the First World War, lost this community after the war when only 15 families were left. Today there are only a very few families living in İskenderun and carrying on their tradition.

İZMİR SYNAGOGUES

The history of the İzmir Jews goes back to the period of Alexander the Great. There are documents showing the presence of a Jewish community in İzmir when Alexander the Great occupied Palestine in 325 B.C. When he left Palestine, he settled some Jews who were with him, in İzmir. Furthermore, another Jewish community is said to have lived in Ephesus in 300 B.C.

Since İzmir was greatly influenced by earthquakes, epidemics and fires in the flow of history, the Jews mostly moved to and settled in the neighbouring towns and cities.

The Byzantine domination of İzmir gave way to Genoese domination in 1261 and to Seljuk domination in 1300. The Etz-Ha-Haim Synagogue is said to have been already built by then.

The Knights of Rhodes captured part of İzmir in 1344, while the rest of the city was under Seljuk rule. Sultan Murad II annexed İzmir to the Ottoman Empire in 1424.

The İzmir Jews are formed mostly by the groups who immigrated from Spain during the 16th century. The Jews founded printing houses in İzmir during the 17th century, and they soon gained an important place in the commercial life of the city.

They lived in a small district between the Turkish and Armenian districts. Mezarlıkbaşı and Havra Streets were places where the Jewish inhabitants were most crowded. Others lived in the Maşallah district near Kemeraltı and the Karataş district.

İzmir witnessed an important event in Jewish history, namely the pseudo-prophet Sabetay Sevi event. Sabetay Sevi was a Jew of İzmir, who declared himself a prophet and caused a conflict and cliques among the Jewish community. Upon a decree by the Sultan, he was arrested and put into jail in Çanakkale. Some of his followers later converted to Islam.



İzmir Algazi Synagogue





General view of the "Teva".


מזרח
מזרח
ירושלים

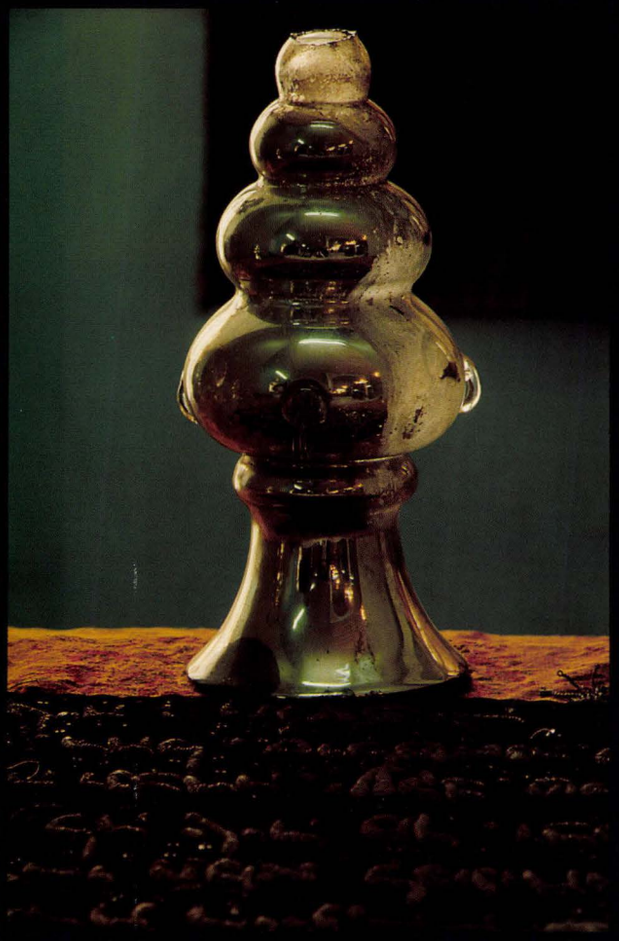


The "Ehal".


אשתחוה
אנכי יי׳ לא תרצח
לא יהיה לא תנאף
לא תשא לא תגנב
זכור את לא תענה
כבד את לא תחמד



This has been presented by Avram Penes Kalaaka 23 AV 5661



Genoese Lantern.



Pediment over the main entrance.



Embellishment.



Venetian lantern.



İzmir Aydınlı (Shalom) Synagogue



View from the entrance.



This is one of the six synagogues mentioned by Rabbi Escapa. (Those six synagogues are Etz-Ha-Haim, Portugal, Geroush, Mahazice Torah, Talmud Torah and Shalom.) This synagogue was also called "Kaal de Abasho". It was largely damaged by the great fire in 1841, but was rebuilt during the same year. When the Jews of Aydınlı moved to İzmir and started to worship in this synagogue, it began to be called the Aydınlı Synagogue.



View of the "Teva".





Ceiling decoration.



The "Parohet".



The "Keter" and "Rimonnim".



Torah rolls.



İzmir Ez Hayyim (Beit Hillel) Synagogue



General view.



This synagogue was built in the mansion of the Palaci family.



Inner view of the Ehal.



Detail of the Ehal door.



Torah rolls and Etsba-On (Puntero)



İzmir Beit İsrael Synagogue



Exterior view of the Synagogue.

The İzmir Beit Israil Synagogue was built by the Jews of the Karataş district upon a decree issued in 1905.



Detail of the "Ten Commandments" on the Ehal door.

Women's Chamber of the Synagogue.


311
334



General view from the entrance.



The dome of the Synagogue and its decorations.



Details of the Ehal door.



İzmir Bikour Holim Synagogue



The view of the ceiling decorations from the "Teva".



During an epidemic in İzmir, there came a time when there was no place in the hospitals for the sick and they were put in the synagogues. This synagogue is named as to commemmorate that event. It was built in 1724 by Solomon de Ciavez, a Jew of Dutch origin. The synagogue which suffered great damage from the 1772 fire, was restored during the 1800s by another member of the Ciaves family.





General interior view from the entrance.



View of the "Teva" from the entrance.



Detail of the "Teva" decorations.



The Ehal door and Parohet.



Detail of the corner decorations.



Detail of the niche decorations.



Detail of the ceiling decorations.

Detail of the corner decorations.



General view of the Midrash next to the Synagogue.



Detail of the Parohet.



Detail of the Parohet.



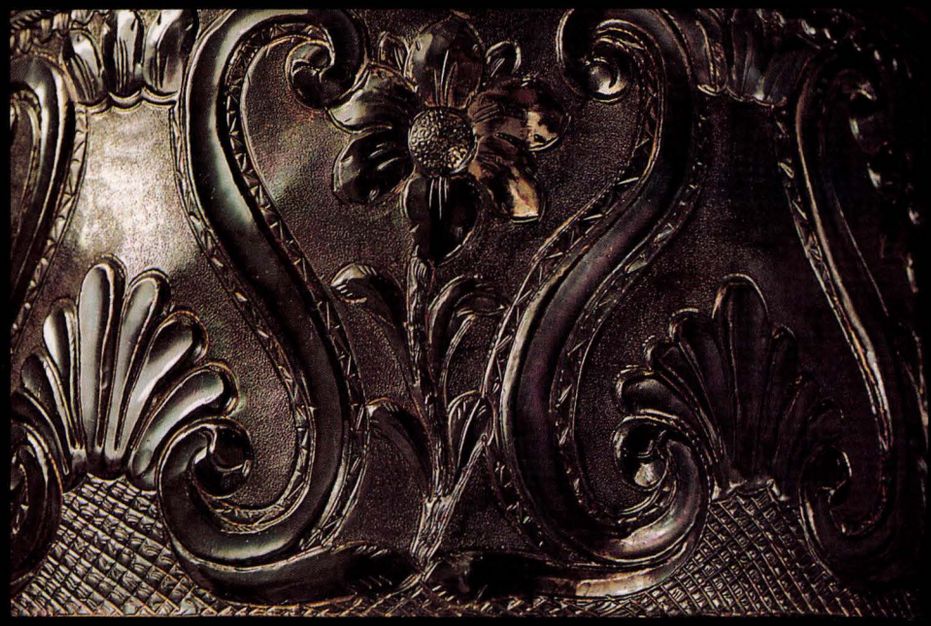
Detail of the Parohet.



Detail of the "Rimonnim".



Silver decoration on Torah roll cover.



A "Keter" in detail.



İzmir Giveret (Signora) Synagogue





This synagogue is thought to have been built by a very eminent Jewish lady, namely Donna Gracia (Mendez) Nasi, of Portugese origin. Following the great damage of the 1841 fire, it was rebuilt by a Jew by the name of Moiz Yerushalmi.



The first view of the synagogue building seen on a wall decoration.



The "Teva"s on both sides and the "Ehal" in between.



Detail of the niche decorations.



The "Ehal" between two "Teva"s.



Torah rolls.



Silver Torah roll cover decoration.



A detail of the decoration and inscription over the Ehal door.



General view.



İzmir Rosh Ha Ar Synagogue



Garden gate.
This is a small synagogue on the Karataş Hill.

THE CLOTHS AND EMBROIDERIES USED IN THE SYNAGOGUES

The cloths and embroideries made by the Jews reflect the tradition of the whole Ottoman society. The Jews used most of those cloths and embroideries as "Parohet"s (the curtain covering the sacred cupboard) and as case or cover for the Torah rolls.

The most frequently used embroideries are those made with silver or gilt thread on satin and velvet. Cloths used for religious purposes, such as the "Parohet"s, are usually embroidered by gilt thread. Most of these cloths are turned into synagogue curtains, from former bridal guilts, pillow cases and dress parts. The Torah roll covers made of cloth also have similar origins. The covers of the prayer tables and the synagogue furnitures, the bowers which are called "Suka" and used at the Sukkot Feast and the wedding bowers (Huppo) are also covered with the same kind of embroidered cloths.

The embroidery made of silver or gilt thread over pieces of cardboard or leather, is called "Dival Work". There are several widely used designs in Dival work. European and Ottoman motifs like medallions with borders, regular repitition of a single or twin design (Bursa Work), boughs coming out of a pot or one single stem and then entwining to become a spreading design, the arched head motif resembling a "Mihrab", etc. are used together on these silver and gilt thread embroideries. The motifs are usually made with floral designs, used together with pots and baskets.

Detail from the "Parohet".



Another detail of the Parohet.



The technique of using textile and metal together, is accomplished by tacking up pieces of metal onto cloths. Many "Parohet"s and Torah roll covers, particularly in İstanbul, Edirne, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, are made using this technique. The most frequently used motif on these is the above mentioned arched center motif. Some have also oil lamp or Menorah designs.

The single or double hand motif used in the silver and gold threaded embroideries, are usually placed next to the words explaining the votive offering of the "Parohet" or the Torah roll cover on which the embroidery is made. The same motif is also used on the amulets and charms against the evil eye which are pinned onto pregnant women and babies; thus showing that this motif is considered as a charm.



Another detail of the Parohet.





View of the Teva.



Ehal door.



Oil lantern.



Another oil lamp.



Inscription over the "Parohet" and detail of the Parohet.

This was presented by Yahuda Maroltov Alba's children in 5694 (Pink parohet used to be spread on women after child-birth)



Prayer script attached to the Ehal door.

***M**ay the name of the Lord of the World be blessed*

***M**ay His crown and throne be blessed*

***L**et Thy Grace be forever over the people of Israel*

***L**end us the power of Thy Right Hand and Thy Sacred energy*

***A**nd please accept our prayers with Mercy*

***L**et our prayers be met with Mercy before Thee and grace to our lives*

***L**et (me) this slave of Thine be considered among the truthful loyals*

***L**et Thy Grace be forever with my people of Israel*

***T**hou feed and nourish everyone*

***T**hou dominate everything*

***T**hou art sovereign over states and kingdoms*

***S**overeignty is Thine*

***I** am a slave of Thy sacredness*

***W**ho prostrates before Thee and Thy religion*

***I** believe not in man*

***I** rely not on man*

***B**ut only the Lord of Heavens*

***B**ecause He is the true God*

***A**nd his belief is true*

***A**nd it is true that His Prophets always spread kindness*

***I** beg you*

***A**nd I pray to your Sacred Name*

***F**ill my heart and the kind hearts of the Israelite people*

***W**ith kindness, life and health*

***A**men.*



A commemoration note.

This is a commemoration

I hereby declare before the community

That Man gleams with glory when he makes a donation

He gains beauty and power

This is a commemoration for Yaakov Ben Yahuda Danon's

Daughter who died in the prime of her life

18 Tevet 5665



İzmir Hevra Synagogue





General view.



General view of the "Teva".



View of the Ehal door.



Detail of the niche decoration.



İzmir Shaar Ha Shamaim Synagogue


אשרי העם
שככה
לך



The Ehal door and Teva.

SHAAR HA SHAMAIM

This synagogue is in Alsancak, İzmir. Its name means the "Gate of Heavens".


SIRA
17
SIRA
19
SIRA
21



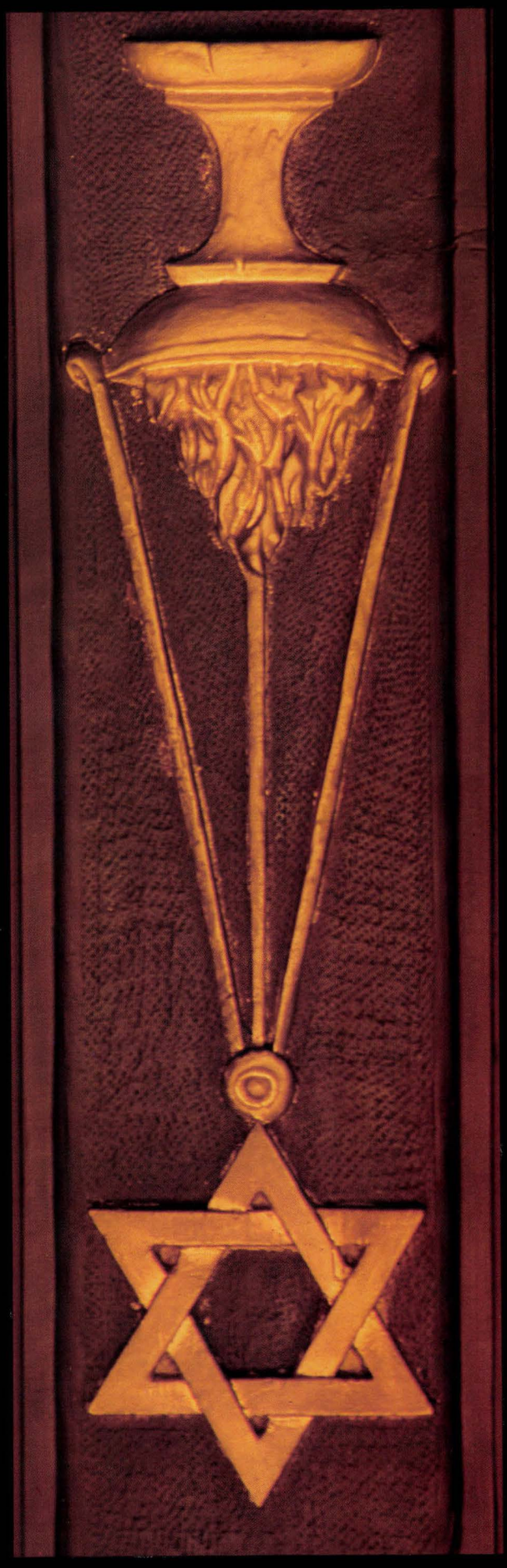
General view from the entrance.



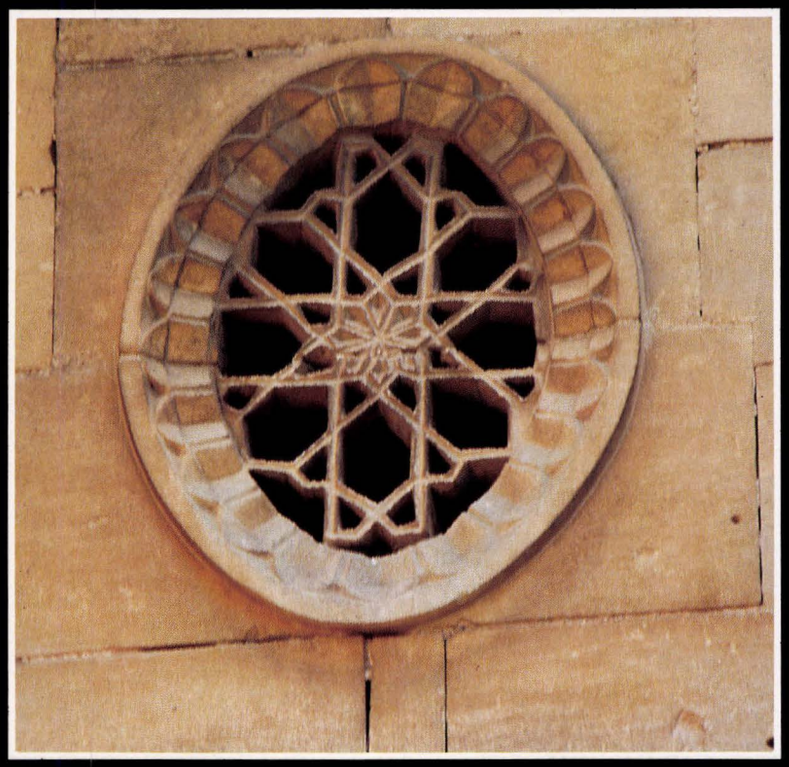
View of the Ehal door.



Magen David over the main gate.



Magen David on the dome tambour.



Kilis Synagogue



View of the Synagogue from Muallak Mosque Street. (The Synagogue is at number 7 Ön Muallak Mosque Street and lot 777/111 on Sabah Pazarı Street).



View of the Synagogue from Dedeağa Street.

Like Gaziantep, Kilis was also an important center on settlement for the Arab origined Jews. The Jewish community in Kilis was occupied with trade, and mostly in soap and edible fat production. The Jewish community in Kilis was very conservative, and they had their own synagogues and cemetery.



View of the inner courtyard.



Inner courtyard and the Southern Walls of the Synagogue





Inner courtyard and the Southern Walls of the Synagogue.





This place was built by the Jews of Kilis in the name of the late young Torono Moshe Pinoshen in 5656.



(It was the sacred and generous group who granted us this place.) In accord with the phrase in the Holy book "May God grant you goodness", may those members of the sacred union who granted us this place, be highly awarded. Haim Amira.



This place was built by the generous Moshe de Punto in 5646.



This place was built by Sara in the name of her father and master, the respectable Avram Akuv, so that his soul may enjoy the garden of Eden.



Kırklareli Synagogue



View of the garden entrance.



Mili Mitrani

Torah rolls.



The chandelier in the synagogue.

It is not known when the town of Kırklareli was founded and what its ancient name was. Before it was conquered by the Turks, the town was called "Saranta Ekklesies" (Forty Churches) as named by the Byzantines. When it was captured by the Turks in the 14th century, its name was changed to Kırk Kilise, which is the Turkish of Forty Churches. After the foundation of the Turkish Republic, the town became a province capital and its name was converted into Kırklareli. When it was a subdivision of the Edirne province during the Ottoman period, there was quite a large Jewish community living in the town. Today only 8-10 families live there and they have a small synagogue.



General view.



Sardes Synagogue



The history of Sardes goes back as far as 3000 years ago. The unearthed relics show that Sardes had relations with Troy during the Bronze Age. According to Herodotus, the Heracles family of the Mycenae dynasty ruled over Sardes circa 1200 B.C. It is thought that it was the people of this dynasty who wandered in Western Anatolia after ruining Troy. The Lydians lived in this region during the first millenium B.C. It was the Lydian kings who first coined money. Kroisos, the last Lydian king, committed suicide after he lost the war with the Persian king Kyros in 545-47 B.C., and his treasures were carried off to Persia.



The great hall with 14 columns.

Alexander the Great seized Sardes in 334 B.C. Sardes went under the rule of the Pergamum Kingdom in 180 B.C. and under the Romans in 133 A.D. There was a very great earthquake in 170 A.D. and the city was restored during the reigns of Emperor Tiberius and Emperor Claudius. They built a gymnasium, a bath, a stadium and a basilica. Sardes was a bishopric center during the Byzantine period. It was seized by the Turks in the 11th century. During the time of Tamerlane, the city was inhabited for a while, but was deserted after a plague. Its name was later given to a village.





Column capital.



Detail of the floor mosaics.

Mosaics on the wall.



Detail of the floor mosaics.



Detail of the floor mosaics.

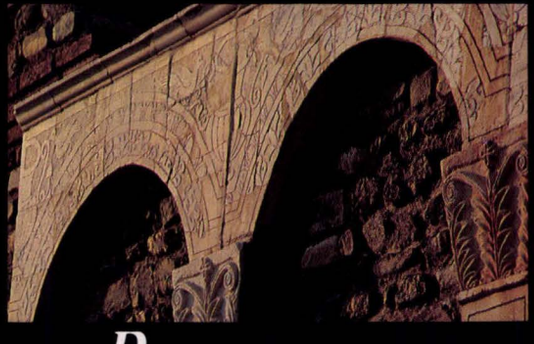


The northern wall.



Detail of the northern wall.





Detail of the northern wall.

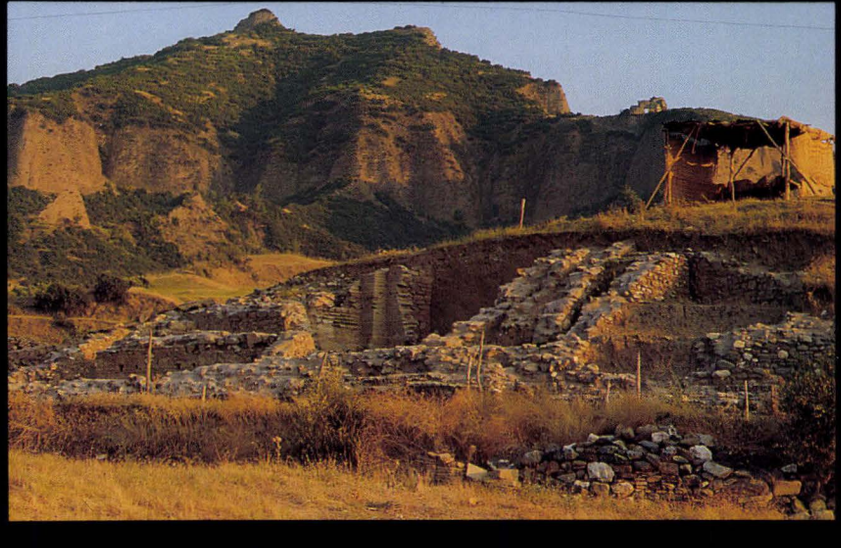
The complex of gymnasium and bath, which was one of the most important monuments of the Roman period, is still among the places of grandeur in Sardes. Emperor Septimus Severus had the majestic courtyard built in the names of his sons Caracalla and Geta and his wife Julia Donna. A synagogue from the 3rd century A.D. was found in 1962, at a point south of the Palastrium and north of the marble road. An inscription, unearthed in a room behind the synagogue apsis, states that the synagogue was built by Emperor Lucius Verusa and the construction was completed in 211 A.D. simultaneously with the gymnasium complex. According to the original layout, there were two buildings, one on the north and the other on the south of the columned courtyard which was called the Pallastrium; the one on the south was the synagogue.

The Hebrew inscription found in the synagogue states that the city was granted to the Jewish community by Emperor Lucius Verusa. There is a platform west of the three-sectioned synagogue. This platform is understood to have been built on an earth-filled area. The platform which is separated from the building shed by a row of columns, shows that the synagogue had an original layout for itself. When you enter through the door opening to the shed, you are in a great hall with a crater-like marble fountain in the center. The floor between this hall with 14 columns and the outer walls, is mosaic covered with mosaics. The mosaics display the "Mandala" figure and other particular forms in the colour of iron oxide which is the main decorative element of the building and which distinguishes it from other buildings. The main hall consists of seven sections separated by six columns along the northern and southern walls. There are numerous shops in the market which is situated on the southern slope connecting the synagogue to the town.



The "Mandala" and the inner courtyard.

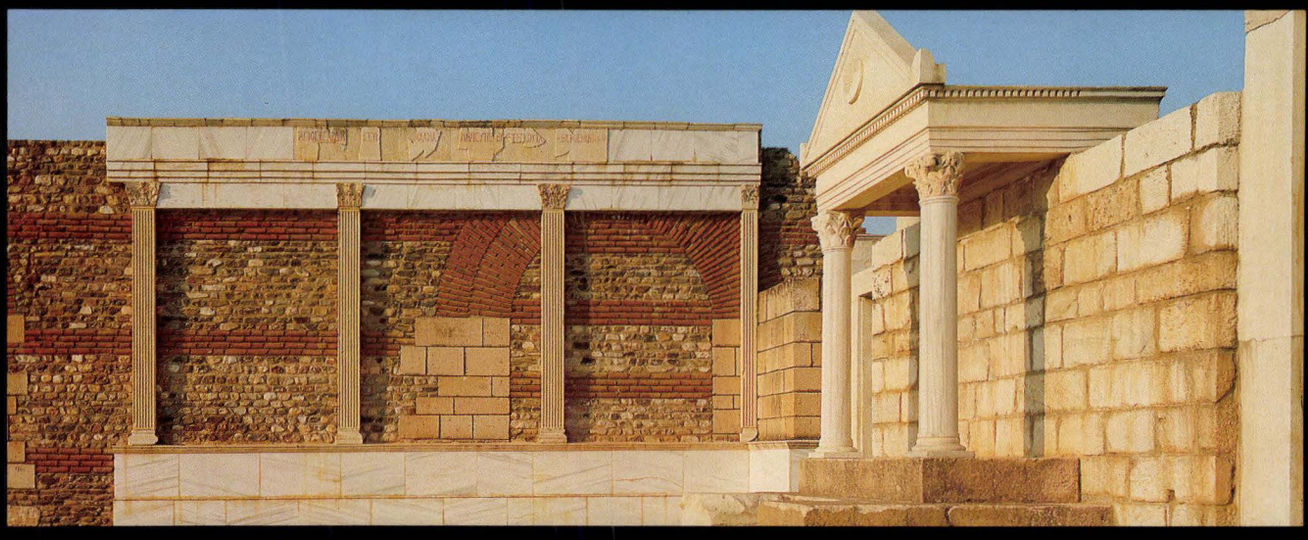
Entrance to the synagogue.



The northern facade.

Detail of the wall.







İstanbul Balat Synagogue

BALAT

The Jewish history of the Balat quarter, which is situated between the Fener and Ayvansaray districts on the Golden Horn, goes back to the Byzantine period. During that period there was a synagogue in Balat, built by the Jewish community who came from the town Ohri of Macedonia.

After the conquest of İstanbul by Sultan Mehmed II , the Jewish population in Balat gradually increased. Those who came from the towns Kastoria, Ihtipol of Macedonia and from Salonika built the Kastoria, Ihtipol and Salonika Synagogues in Balat, and so Balat became the quarter of the Macedonian Jews.

The Jews who came in great masses from Spain and Portugal between 1492-1497 built the Geroush, Neve-Shalom Messina and Monties Synagogues, none of which is still erect. The period between the 18th and 19th centuries was the golden age of Balat. The rich and cultivated Jewish families of the rather cosmopolitan community in Balat lived in the Ahrida, Dubek, Tahta Minare, and Kastoria quarters of the district, whereas the others lived in the quarters of Karabaş or Lonca.

The "Alliance Israelite Universelle" school founded in 1875, first was an educational center for boys following a French training programme; and it became a girls' school in 1882, thus contributing to the development of the district. Since it was not a senior, but only a junior-high school, the graduates started to go to other schools near Galata.

When Balat went through a period of stagnation due to the First and Second World Wars, some Jewish families left the district. Particularly, following the burning down of the Alliance school which was never restored, and the movement of the community leadership to Galata in 1942, the remaining Jewish families moved to more modern parts of İstanbul and built new synagogues in their new quarters.

When the Balat synagogues thus lost their communities, they were left to their fate and became dilapidated. Only the Ahrida synagogue among all the others, has survived to our day and it carries on religious service on Saturdays and holy feasts.

BALAT SYNAGOGUES

An imperial firman of 1694 proves the presence of 3 synagogues in Balat dating back to the Byzantine period.

POL YASHAN

It is also called Poli Yashan, meaning "Old Town". This synagogue is considered a heritage of the Byzantine Jews because it is mentioned in a letter of Rabbi Joseph Colon de Mantove written to Rabbi Elie Capsali in 1480. It burned down in 1890. Although it was rebuilt in 1902, it no longer stands.

GEROUSH

The Geroush synagogue, which means "to remove, to exile" in Hebrew, is also called the Geroush Safarad meaning "exile from Spain". It was built in a quarter with 30-40 houses. It had a Midrash and also a Yeshiva. The synagogue burned down during the Karabaş Dibek fire in 1890. There was also the now long forgotten Neve Shalom Synagogue in the same quarter of Sigri. This synagogue,which was built in 1453 by the Spaniard Jews, went into ruin around 1853.

IHTIPOL OR ISHTIPOL SYNAGOGUE

This synagogue, which was built by the Jews who came from the town Ishtip of Macedonia, is in ruins now. The stained glass windows of the small, wooden synagogue were very interesting in their day. The consecutive Magen David motifs in the round windows were a unique feature of the stained glass. Chora Mosque could be seen from the upper storeys of the synagogue. The great wooden mansion with tall windows next to the synagogue was known as the Chief Rabbinate Office.

VERIA SYNAGOGUE

The Veria or Cora Feria Synagogue was near the back wall of the Yambol Synagogue, past the Armenian Church on Derya Street. It has now been turned into a garage. This synagogue was built by the Jews from the Caraferia town of Macedonia. Although there are contradictory stories about it, it is known that the synagogue was ruined during a fire in the late 19th century. Veria Synagogue had a Talmud-Torah which burned down together with the synagogue in 1897 and was not rebuilt. A Jewish school was built on the synagogue plot between 1926-1929, consisting of a nursery and an elementary school with its Talmud-Torah. It was later used as the Macabaiat (Jewish Gymnasium) headquarters. When the sports club was closed, the building became an entertainment center for the young. Today none of those activities are carried on.

TCHANA SYNAGOGUE

This Synagogue on Çiçekli Bostan street also dates back to the Byzantine period. It was sold to the Sephardic Jews in 1663 and was in service until the 1950s.

It was built by the Jews coming from the town of Tziana. This massive building of stone and bricks, had a prison in its basement where those sentenced by the Religious Courts held in the synagogue on Mondays and Thursdays served their days. It was in use until 1908. Today there is a erect. foundry in its place.

Tchama Synagogue, which had a Yeshiva until the 1940s, was replaced by a Mahazeke Torah, serving as a Sunday school. Today only the outer walls and the foundry are still erect.



İstanbul Ahrida Synagogue



Exterior view.

Ahrida Synagogue on Kürkçü Çeşme Street is the largest and most majestic among the Balat synagogues. This synagogue, which was built by the Jewish immigrants from Ohri, Macedonia, was a Romaniate synagogue serving the Byzantine Jews before the conquest of İstanbul. The building, which had a plain construction of piled stones and bricks, has undergone various alterations and restorations up to the present day. Its wooden dome is decorated with rich adornments. Just like Jambol Synagogue, its "Teva" was illuminated by a gorgeous chandelier hanging from the large dome. Its "Ehal-Ha-Kodesh", which was never restored or altered, has a design inspired by Noah's Arc. The "Teva" with its mosaics and mother-of-pearl repoussé worked doors bears the marks of centuries. There was a small "Midrash" in the courtyard for daily prayer service. The Jewish primary school which was next to the rear wall of the synagogue used to give education in Turkish, Hebrew and German. Following a great fire, the synagogue had its first restoration in 1694, and it was later repaired respectively in 1709 and 1823. The date 5641 (1881), inscribed over the gate, indicates that the building underwent a great restoration at that time.



Ceiling decorations.

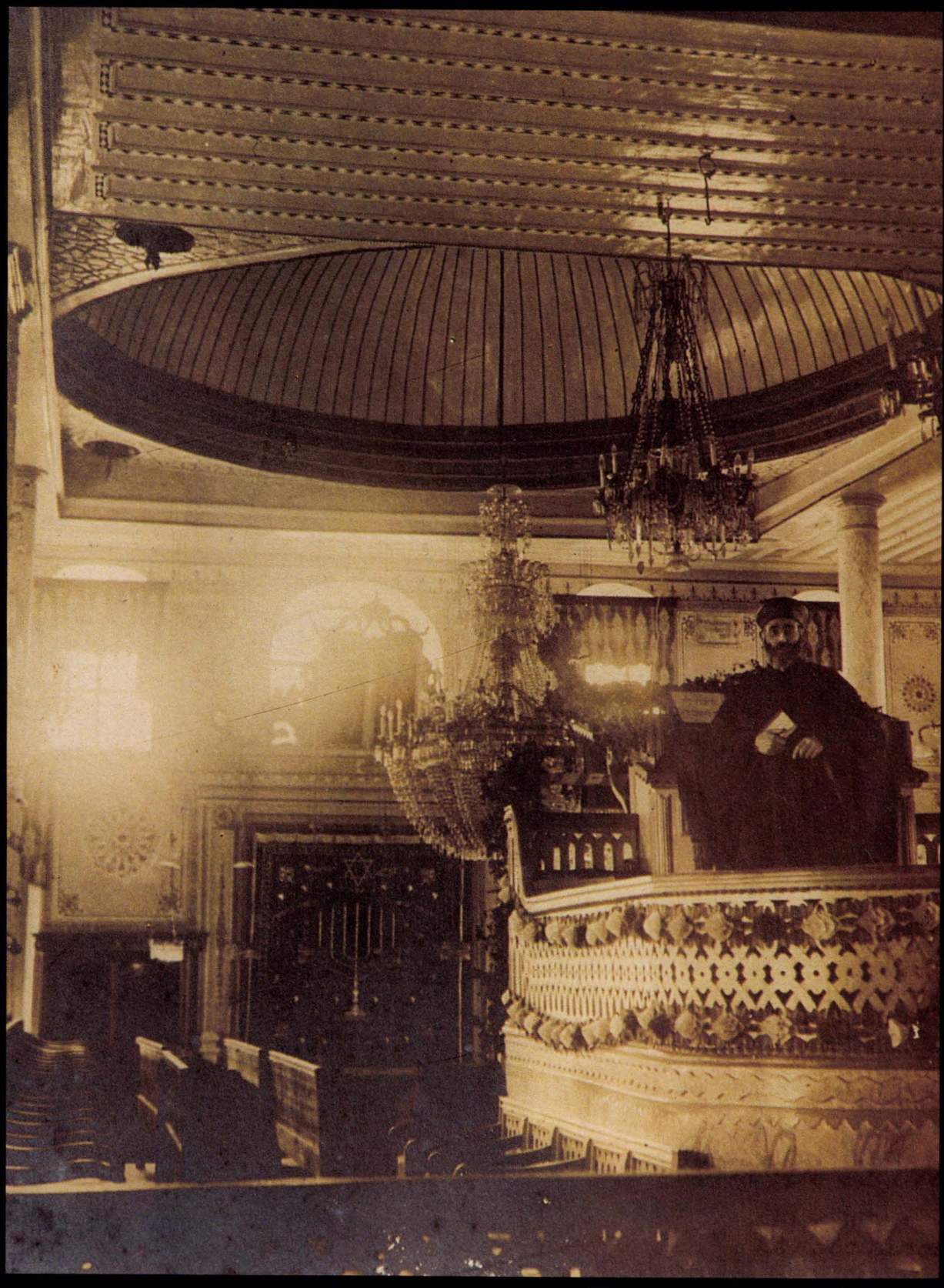


Wall decorations.

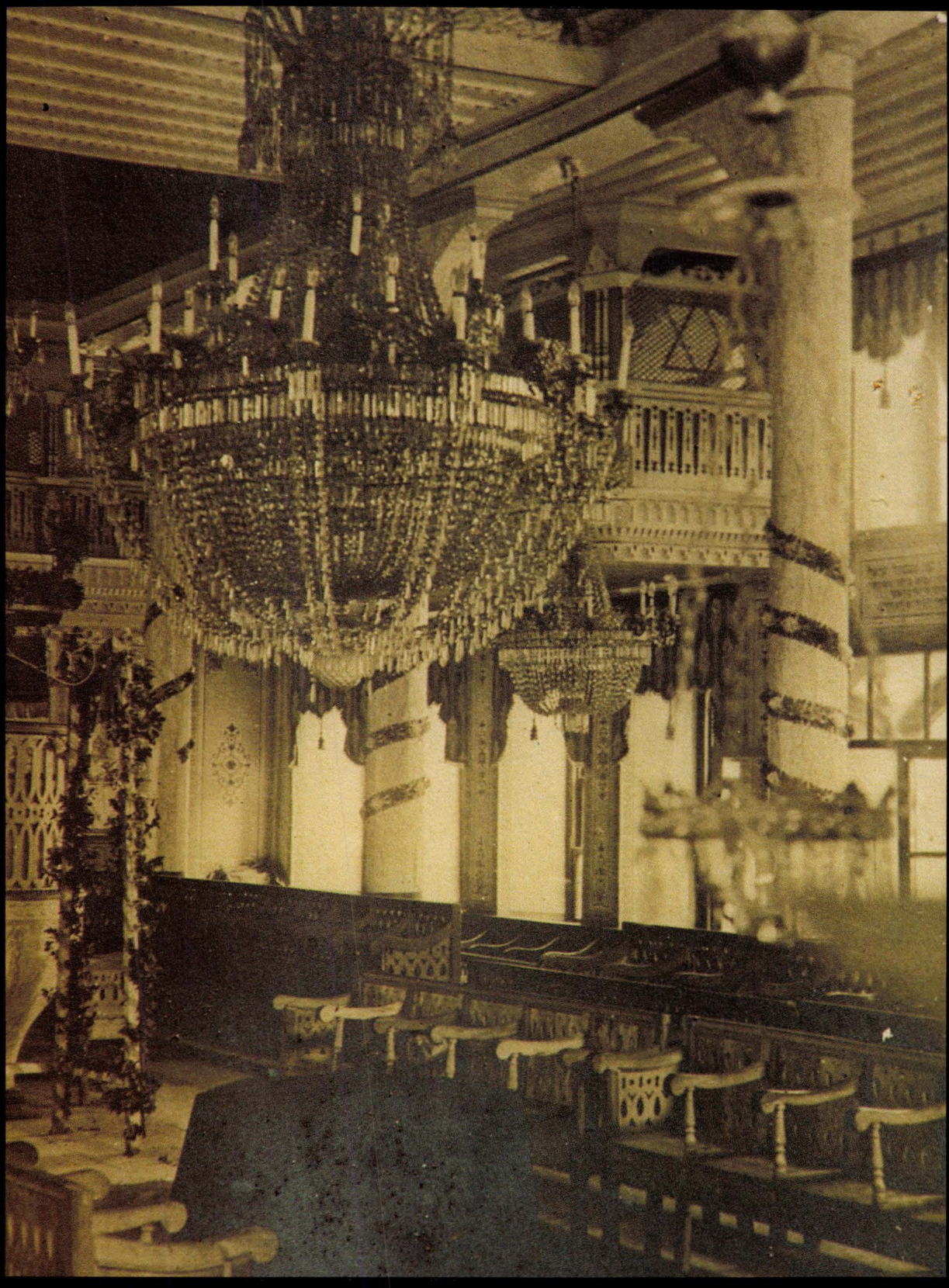


Detail from the wall decoration.

The synagogue which was restored twice again in 1926 and 1955, seats 350 people. Ahrida Synagogue, which was formerly a Romaniate synagogue, became the temple of the Sephardim Community in the early 16th century. The interior layout and the centrally situated Teva are in full conformity with Sephardim traditions. The Quincentennial Foundation is now contributing to the restoration of the synagogue.



Former view of the Synagogue.



Former view of the Synagogue.



Mili Mitrani

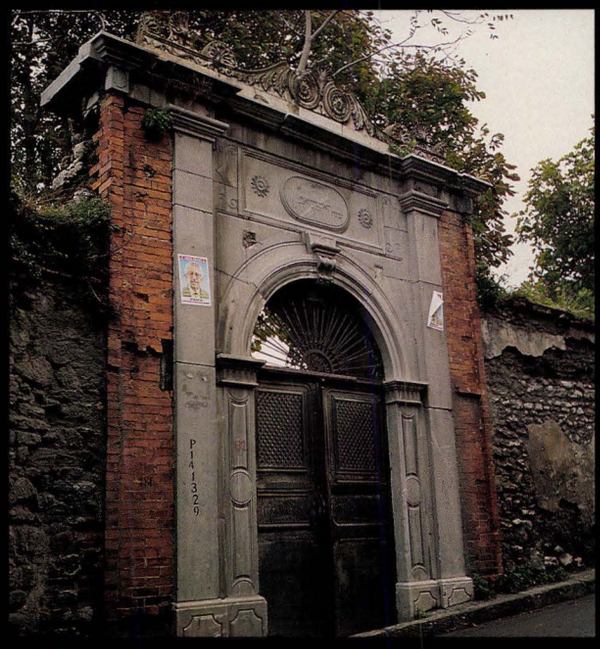
The outer gate.



Inscription on the gate.

Eliaou Synagogue

This synagogue on Demir Hisar Street was in service until 1890. After that time, it was used as a place for washing the dead. It was later sold and used as a storehouse. Only its outer wall, gate and an inscription in Hebrew have survived to our day.



The portal of the Castoria Synagogue.



Remnants of the Synagogue.



Remnants of the Synagogue.

Castoria Synagogue

This synagogue, which was built by the Jewish immigrants from Castoria in 1453, was in service until 1937. The date 5653 (1893) inscribed over its gate, shows that the synagogue was restored at that time. This synagogue was a complex of various buildings. The office of the synagogue officials, the "Gabaim", was on the left of the entrance. Here the officials distributed unleavened bread to the neighborhood on Feast Days for Passover. The marble stairs at the entrance led to the great hall where 150 people could worship. Five large chandeliers hung down from the well adorned wooden dome. Its wooden "Azara" was also richly decorated. The synagogue had electricity installed in 1935, and it had gone under various alterations and restorations up to that time. The "Midrash" with a small hall, was at the other end of courtyard. It was used for morning and evening prayers, and also on Feast days when the synagogue overflowed. The "Midrash" was repaired in 1865. There was a well next to the "Midrash". The believers used to throw their sins into this well on the "Rosh-Ha-Shana" Feast and entered the new year free of their sins. The fountains beside the well were used to wash the dead. There was a smaller synagogue for 75 people at the farther end of the courtyard. This small synagogue was also made of wood and was richly decorated just like the great synagogue. Castoria Synagogue is in ruins now, with only its outer walls and two gates still erect.



İstanbul Or A Hayim Synagogue



Exterior view of the Or-a-Hayim Hospital.



The hospital garden and exterior view of the Synagogue.



The view of the Ehal door from the Teva.

The foundation of the Or-a-Hayim Hospital which has served the İstanbul Jews for 133 years, was laid on 18 March 1858 upon the initiative of Dr. Rafael Dalmediko and the firman of Sultan Abdülhamid II. That first building of the hospital was very plain. When it was closed in 1883, the Or-a-Hayim Society was founded to provide health services to home 1884; and a 1992 dispensary was opened in the Çeşmekaya Quarter which borders the Fener district. The foundation of the present hospital was laid on 10 May 1896, and was built by the architect Tedeschinim. Among the donators to the hospital were the Rothchild family and Baroness Hirsh.



Looking towards the Teva from the Ehal door.

A synagogue was built in the hospital garden in 1922 using the donation of a Bagdadian Jew named Elia Kadoori. The synagogue was built in the name of his wife: Laura Kadoori. The Or-a-Hayim Hospital is a monumental building embracing all the architectural characteristics of the 19th century.



A group of Torah rolls.



The Ten Commandments and wooden decorations over the Ehal door.



Detail from the Keters and Rimonnims.



The portal of the Salonika(Sığri)Synagogue.

Salonika or Sigri Synagogue

This synagogue is on Demir Hisar Street near Fener and takes its name from the Sigri Quarter. It was built by a group of Jews who were brought from Salonika by Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror. According to the registers, the wooden synagogue was restored after a fire in 1836. Its Mahazeke Torah held classes every day until the 1960s. The inscription over the gate which is the only remainder of the synagogue, gives a date of 5686 (1926.)



İstanbul Yambol Synagogue



Exterior view of the synagogue from the courtyard.



Detail of the column capitals.



Detail of the pediment above the main gate of the synagogue.



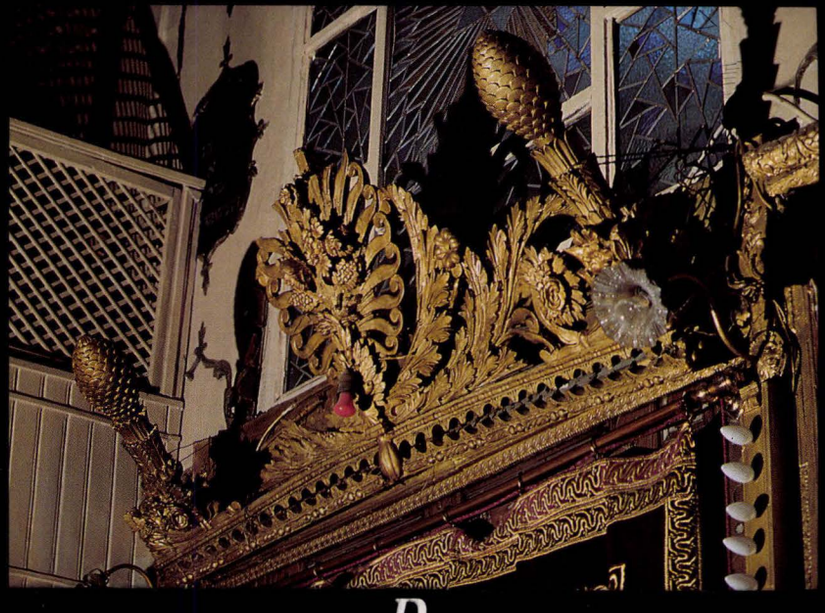

דע לפני מי אתה עומד



General view of the synagogue interior.



Marble decoration over the wooden portal.



Decoration on the Ehal door.



Detail of a Parohet.



The Ehal door decoration with mother-of-pearl engraved on wood.



İstanbul Bakırköy
Synagogue



View of the Synagogue garden.



Embellishments on the Parohet.



A Torah roll hanging on the wall.



Another Torah roll on the wall.





General view.

There was a small Jewish community in Bakırköy, which was named Makriköy until 1923. They had a synagogue and a school as its annex built by Moshe Pinhas. The Jews living in Yeşilköy (Aia Stephanos) used to come to this synagogue for their religious services.



Oil lamps, Torah roll and Ehal door.



Silver decoration.



A "Rimonnim"



Torah rolls.



İstanbul Burgaz Synagogue





Oil lamps and Ehal door.

The summer population of the Princess Islands, where many of the Turkish Greeks used to live, was largely increased when the Jews also started to move there to spend their summer vacations.



The "Ten Commandments" over the Ehal door.



Detail of the Parohet.





Silver rimonnim.

The Jewish community who moved to Burgazada was rather small during the 1950s, and they used to gather at eachother's homes for the Saturday prayers. But as years went by and the Jewish population grew larger, the idea of having a synagogue was developed and a room was rented to be used as a synagogue. When the Jewish community included 350 families in 1968, that small room could not meet the demand; and consequently the present synagogue was built. The first Bar-Mitzva celebrations started to be held in the Burgazada Synagogue. This became an established tradition which is still being carried on. Young girls of 12 heartily celebrate their Bat-Mitzvas, at 4 or 6 different ceremonies held every year. The Jewish population of Burgazada has now reached nearly 750 families who fill the synagogue on Feast Days, and there are even times when the building cannot hold all of the worshippers.



A Rimonnim.



İstanbul Büyükada Hesed Le Avraam Synagogue



Exterior view.



Fountain in the garden.





The Ehal door of the Teva.

The Princess Islands, which were the places of exile for the Byzantine princes and princesses, became summer resorts during the early 17th century upon the introduction of regular ferry service. The largest and most developed of those islands is Büyükada. The Büyükada Synagogue was built in 1907, following the late 19th century formation of a Jewish community.



A Rimonnim.

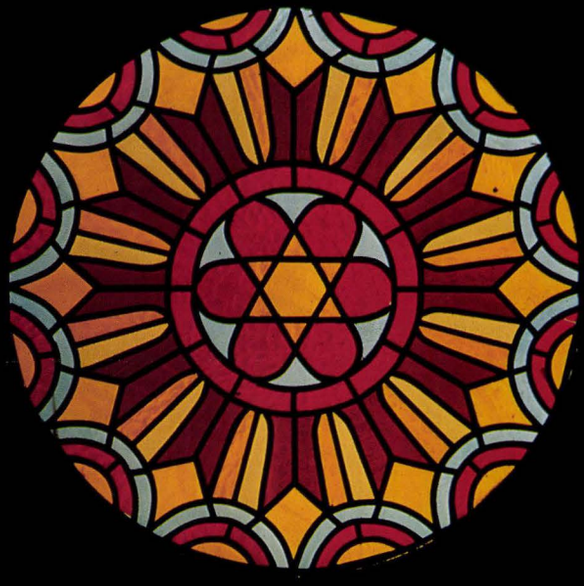


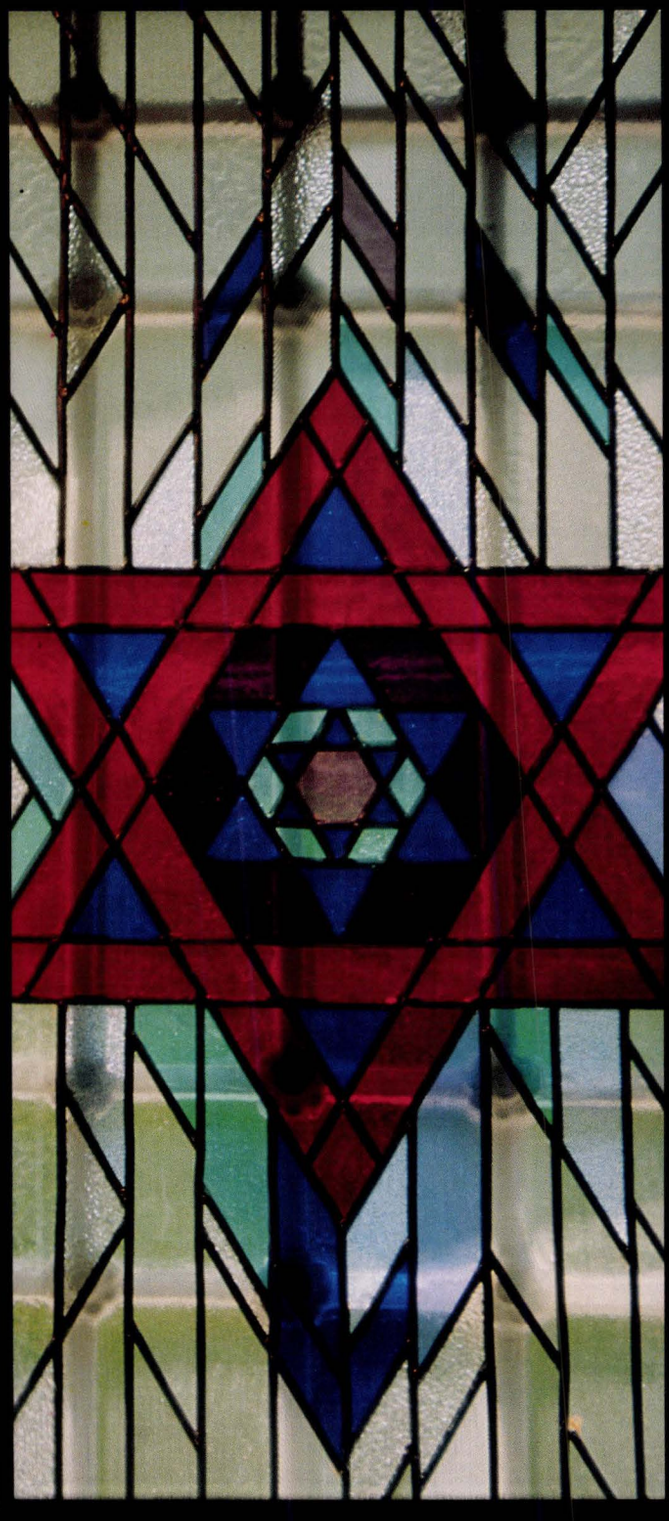


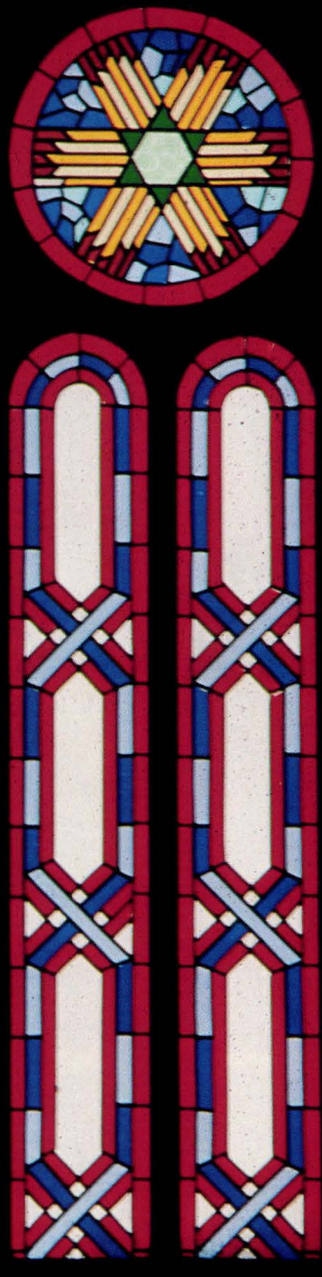
General view.

At first, they used to gather in houses for their Shabat service, but when the neighbours started to complain of that, building synagogue became a necessity. A very small synagogue was soon built on a plot of land donated by Avram Fresko, a Jew living on Büyükada The synagogue was named Hesed le Avram (Benefaction of Avram) to express the community's appreciation for his donation of the land.





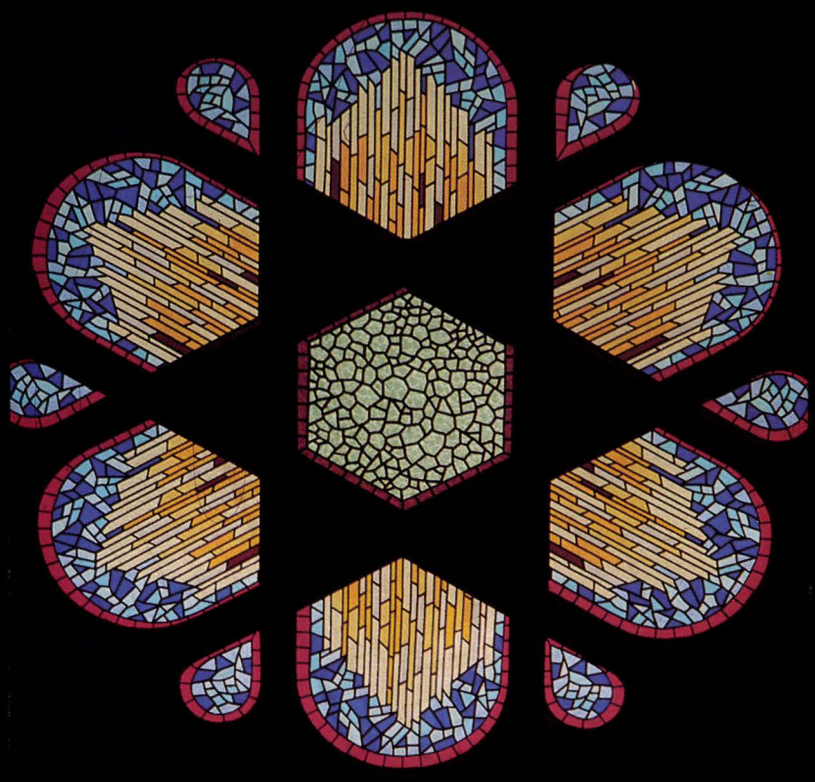




Detail of the stained glasses.



Detail from the stained glasses.

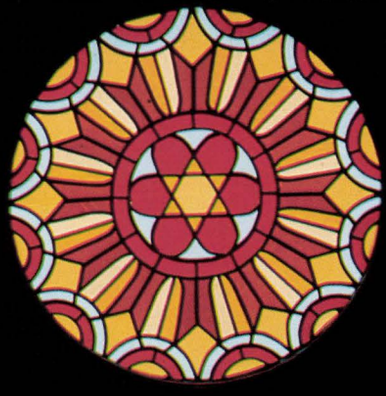


Detail from the stained glasses.

At first, the synagogue was formed by just a canvas stretched over four posts. A wooden synagogue was later built in its place. But as a consequence of the increase of the Jewish summer population, the small synagogue was pulled down and replaced with the present one. Wedding ceremonies were held there, and the brides came to the ceremony after touring the island in a horse carriage. The Bat-Mitzva celebrations which were originally held in the Burgazada Synagogue, gradually began to be shared also by the Büyükada Synagogue. The synagogue which is filled during summer months, starts to await the next summer in deep silence all through the winter.

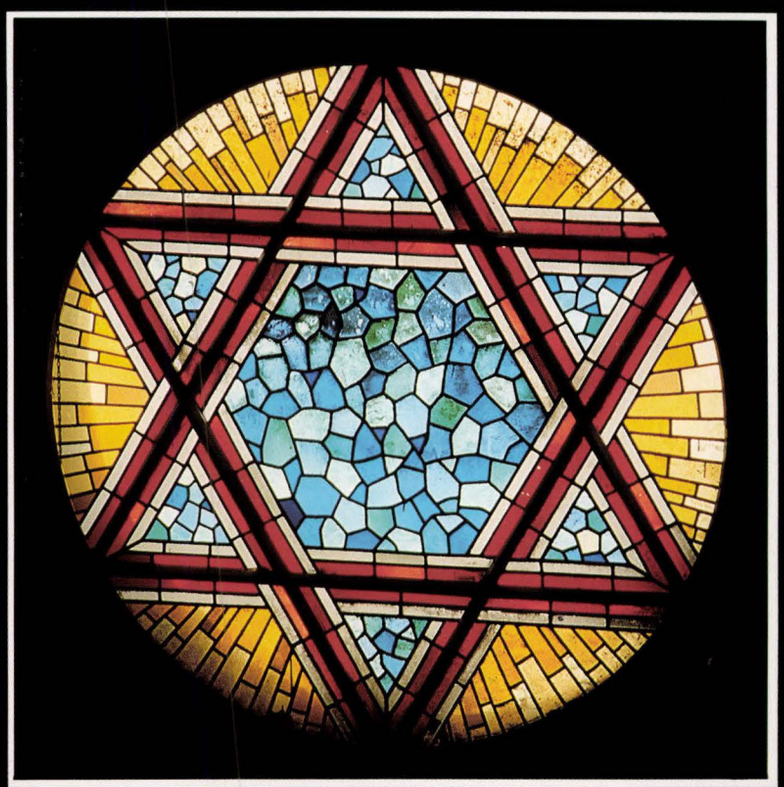


Detail from the stained glasses.





Stained glass windows.



İstanbul Ashkenaz Synagogue



Exterior view.

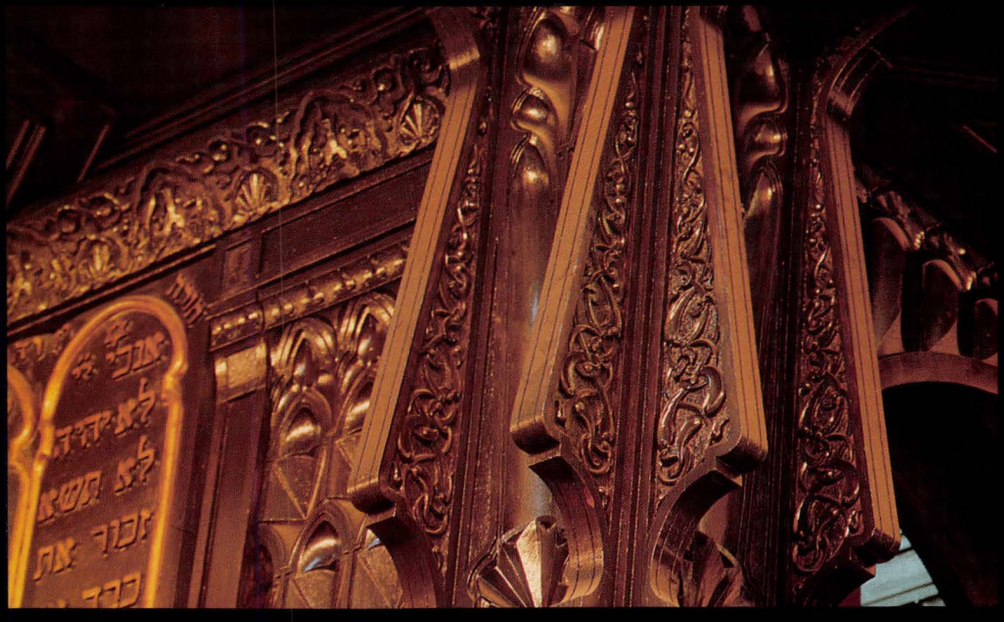




Detail of the Ehal door.



The "Ten Commandments" and an oil lamp.

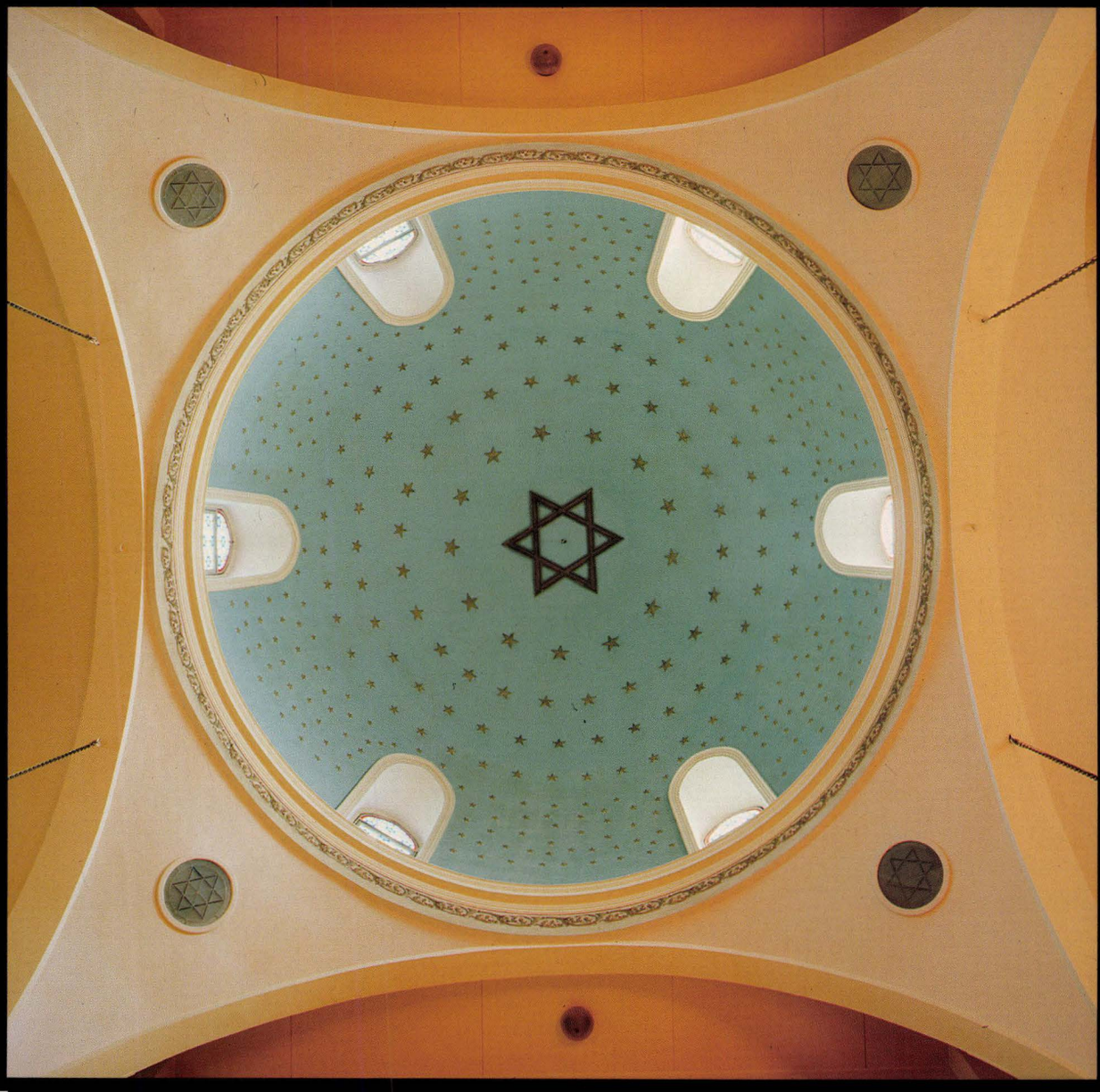


Detail of the Ehal door from another angle.



View of the Women's Chamber.

When the Bavarian King Ludwig III exiled the Jews from his country in 1470, some of those Jews settled along the Danube; some came to İstanbul and formed a Jewish community during the reign of Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror. The Jews who were exiled from Spain and Portugal and who took refuge in the Ottoman Empire from 1492 on greatly influenced and changed the life styles of the Byzantine Jews (Romaniots) and the Italian Jews who lived in the Ottoman lands.



The dome of the Synagogue.





Ascent to the Ehal.

The Ashkenaz Jews who could not be assimilated with the Spanish Jews (the **Sephardims)** *decided to elect a chief rabbi of their own and form a separate community. The Byzantine Italian Jews, who suffered great damages from the fires in İstanbul during the reign of Sultan Mehmed IV, lost their physiognomical features as they assimilated and unified with the crowded Spanish (Sephared) community: whereas the* **Ashkenaz** *community did not mix with them and preserved its essence because they had their own community under the leadership of their chief rabbi and they spoke their own Yiddish language. A group of* **Ashkenaz** *Jews who fled from the genoside in Crimea between 1648-1660, and another group who took refuge in the Ottoman Empire during the Crimean War of 1854-1855, led to the population increase of the Ashkenaz Jews in İstanbul. The Crimean Jews influenced in a short time, the Austrian, Rumanian, German and Russian Jews, and they built their synagogue. This synagogue served for a rather short period. According to the journal El* **Tiempo** *published in İstanbul in 1890, there were 3 Ashkenaz synagogues in the city. These are the Terziler Synagogue (Tophere Begadim) in Galata, the Or* **Hadash** *Synagogue in Kemeraltı and the still serving Austrian Synagogue built on Yüksekkaldırım in* **1900** *by the Austrian Ashkenaz community.*



Detail from the Ehal.



Detail from the Parohet.



İstanbul Göztepe
Synagogue



A view from the garden.



Oil lamp.



Rimonnims.



View of the Ehal door from the Teva.





General view.



Oil lamps and the Ehal door.



Detail of the Parohet.



Rimonnims.



Torah roll decorations.



İstanbul Hasköy Ezger Synagogue and Library



İstanbul Hasköy Maalem Synagogue



Entrance from the garden.

When Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror conquered İstanbul, he found a Jewish community living in Hasköy. It is said that Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror had his imperial tent erected in this neighbourhood and liked its surroundings so much that the place was called Hasköy (meaning the Village of the Sovereign). It is also said that the Conqueror brought many Armenian and Jewish citizens from various parts of Anatolia to İstanbul in order to increase the town's population, which suffered a drop due to the fact that most of the Greeks had left the town after the conquest. The Jews from Anatolia were settled in Hasköy. "There are nearly a thousand houses in gardens in Hasköy. It is a joyful place with fine weather. It is under the administration of the Galata jurisdiction. There is a public bath and a Moslem district. The remaining eleven districts are Jewish settlements. The Jewish community of nearly 17,000 people have 7 synagogues and 12 Rabbis. Hasköy also has two Greek districts and 3 churches." The renowned Ottoman traveller Evliya Çelebi describes Hasköy like this in his travel book.



Decorations on the Ehal door joist.



Detail of the decorations on the Ehal door.



View of the Teva.
Hasköy became the center of the Jewish community in the early 19th century with its Jewish population of 25,000. 20 of the 80 candidates for Chief Rabbi in 1865 were from Hasköy. The great fires which occured one after another led the Jews to move from Hasköy to the districts of either Piri Paşa or Kasımpaşa.



The Karait Jews, who formed a separate sect with their beliefs and rites swerving from the traditional Jewish ways, had lived in Hasköy before İstanbul was under Ottoman rule. There were two Karait synagogues in Hasköy in the 17th century. One of them was called İstanbul Synagogue and the other was Costina or Costandina. Today there is a Karait Synagogue in Hasköy, which is still in service.

The Jewish population of Hasköy gradually dropped at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries. In addition to those who fled the fires and epidemics, those who got rich moved to Şişli, Nişantaş or the coasts of the Bosphorous, thus leaving only the poor and the aged in Hasköy. Consequently, the synagogues lost their function and they gradually withered



away. There were 5 synagogues in Hasköy during the 1950s, namely Piri Paşa, Mayorka, Sarayiko, Arabacılar and Maalem. Research shows that the Mayorka Synagogue dates from the Byzantine period. It is completely ruined now. Of the Piri Paşa Synagogue, the only remainder is its cement covered door plate. The building has been turned into a foundry. Maalem Synagogue which was the most majestic among them, is fully neglected, and seeks protection and care in order to restore its old grandeur. Its walls, which were once zealously adorned, are now covered with white-wash or rotten in part. Hasköy, which was renowned for its green hills a century ago, is now suffering the consequences of poor urbanization. The only remainder from the Hasköy Jews to our day is the Social Service Society to aid the aged. which was a former school. There was also a religious high-school which is not active anymore.



İstanbul Haydarpaşa Hemdat İsrael Synagogue



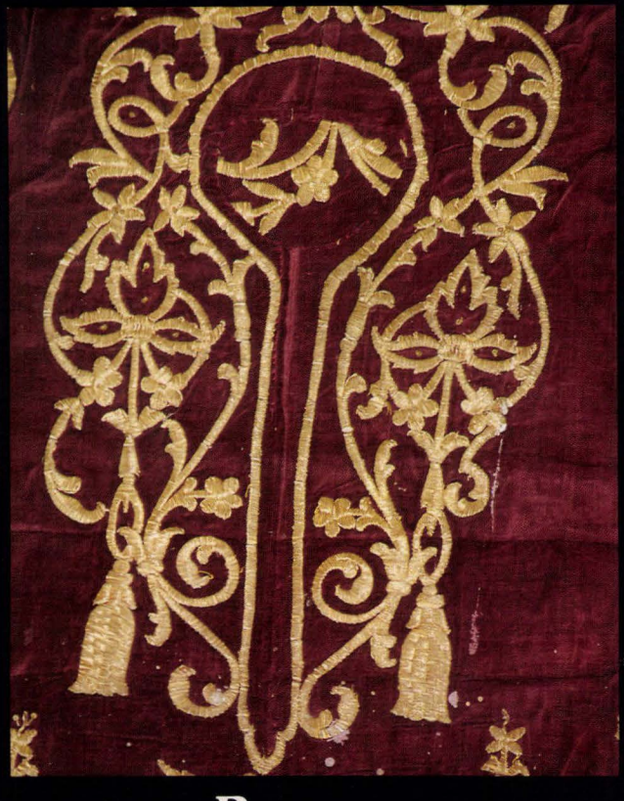
Mili Mitrani

View of the garden.



Mili Mitrani

The Parohets of the Torah rolls.



Mili Mitrani

Detail of an ancient Parohet.

Ceiling decorations.



Detail of the Synagogue gate.



Detail of the ceiling decorations.







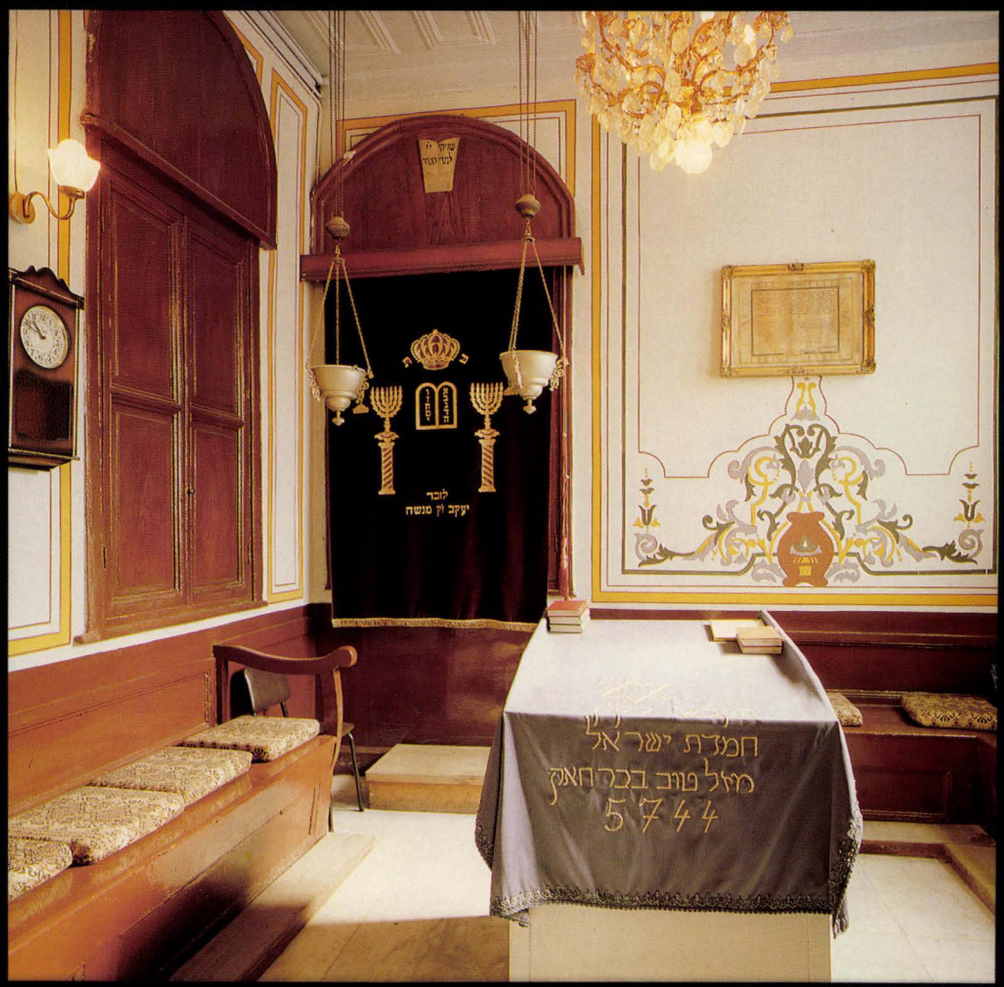
General view of the Women's Chamber.

Üsküdar, Kadıköy and their vicinity which were among the earliest settlement areas, have a Jewish history going back to Byzantium. Following the Kuzguncuk and Balat fires, and the plague in Galata, Haydarpaşa became an important district for the Jewish community who moved there.



General view from the entrance.

The Haydarpaşa Jewish community, who first used a rented house as a synagogue or went to the Kuzguncuk synagogue for their prayers, wanted to built a synagogue after the Dağhamam Synagogue burnt down. But there was a continuous conflict between the Jews and Greeks, particularly over the plot of land where the Jews wanted to build their synagogue. Sultan Abdülhamit sent a military unit from the Selimiye barracks to stop the fight between the two communities. After the interference of the soldiers, the Greek aggressors left the district. The synagogue was started in 1898 and it was put into service in 1899 as the Hemdat-Israel Synagogue. The Jewish community paid homage to Sultan Abdülhamit by giving that name to the synagogue, because the words ''Hemdat'' and ''Hamit'' had the same Hebrew origin.



The small Midrash on the entrance way.



General view of the Torah rolls.

The Hemdat Israel Synagogue has a rectangular interior divided into four by an axis formed by the two gates and by a second axis formed by the Ehal and the Teva. Two large courtyards surround the synagogue. These structural features give the synagogue a much more different appearance from the other synagogues. The Hemdat Israel Synagogue in Haydarpaşa is a modest building among the stone houses, far from the noisy main street.



Passage to the Ehal door.



View of the Teva.



Silver decorations.



Silver Keter



Keter, Rimonnims, luck-charm case, Magen David.



Detail of the Keter and Rimonnims.



Detail of the Parohets and Rimonnim.



Detail of the Keter.



İstanbul Heybeliada Synagogue



Entrance from the garden.

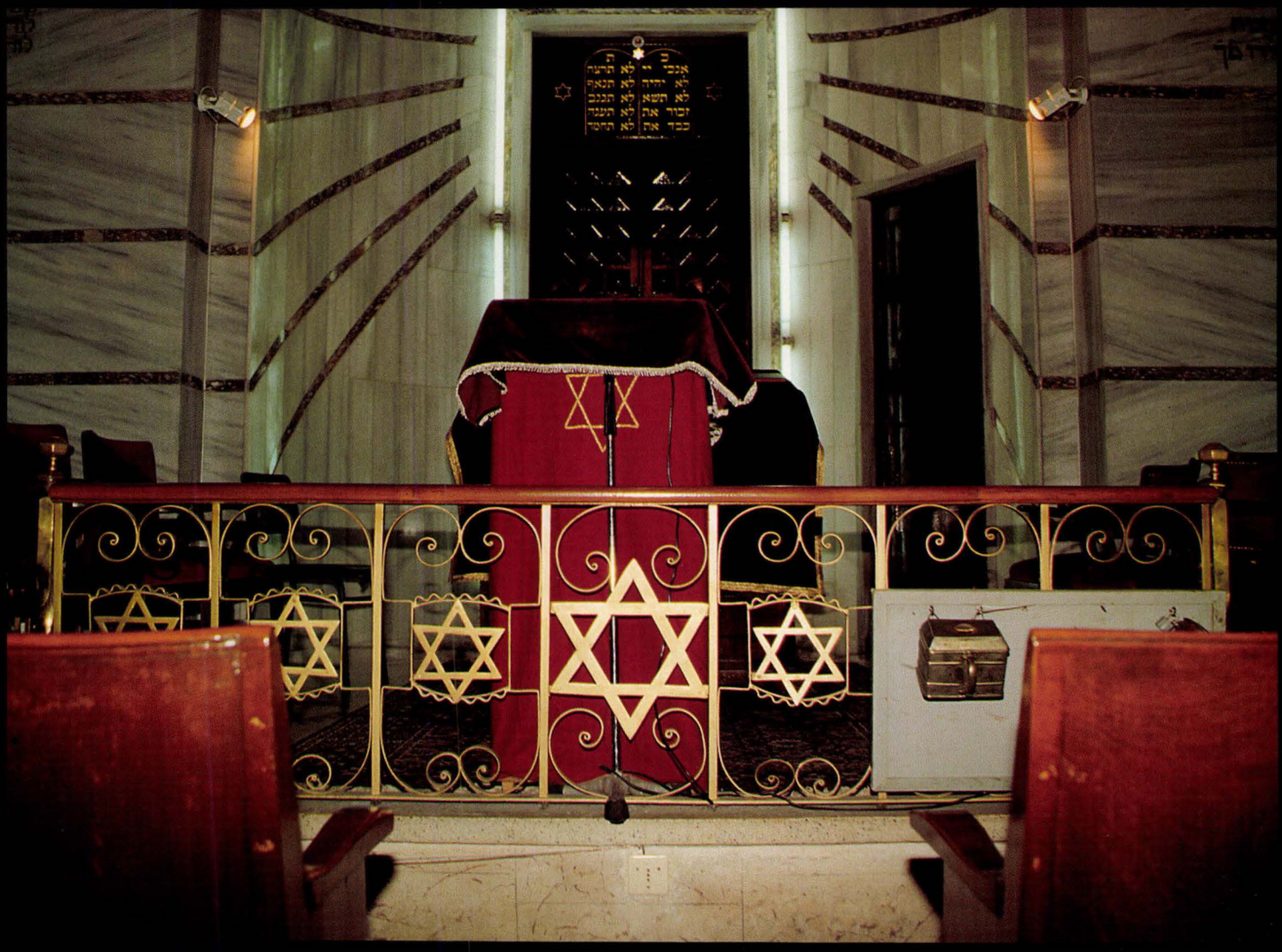


Detail from the Keter



A Rimonnim and its detail.

The Heybeliada (Halki Island) Jews, who at first used a small room as a worshipping place, later built their synagogue, which is still in use.



The Ehal door and view of the Teva.



The "Ten Commandments" on the Ehal door.





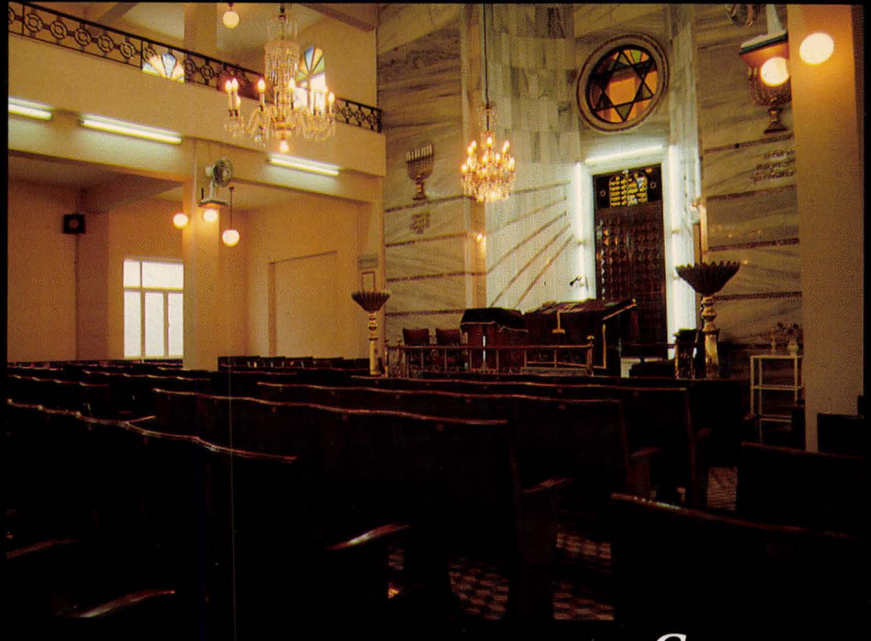
Passage to the Ehal door.



The Teva and Ehal door.



Torah rolls.



General view.

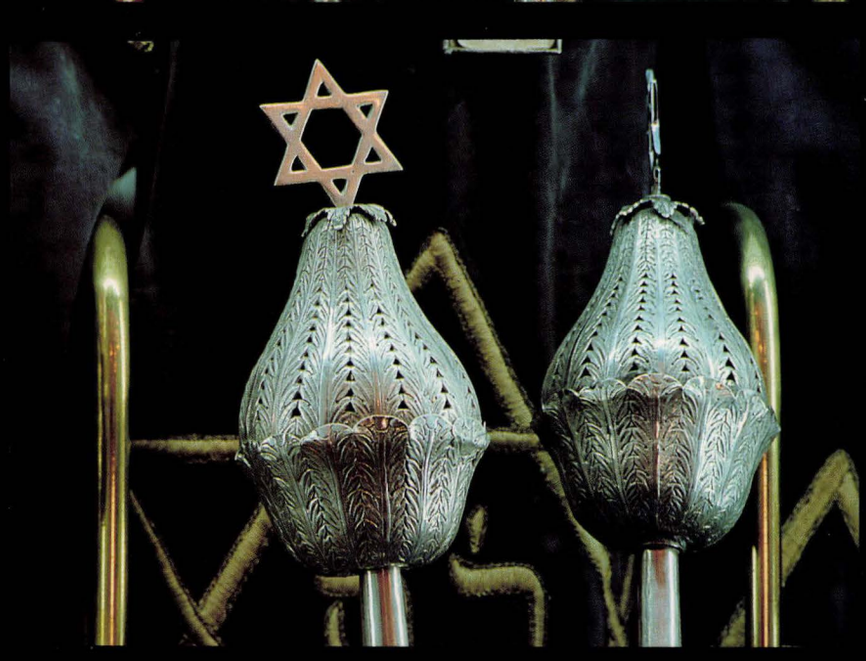


İstanbul Italian Synagogue



Exterior view.





Rimonnims.



Detail of the Rimonnims.



During the rabbinate of Moiz Kapsali who was the last chief rabbi of the Byzantine Jews and the first chief rabbi of the Turkish Jews when Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror captured İstanbul, there was the Ashkenaz Byzantine (Romaniot) Jewish community and an Italian Jewish community as well.



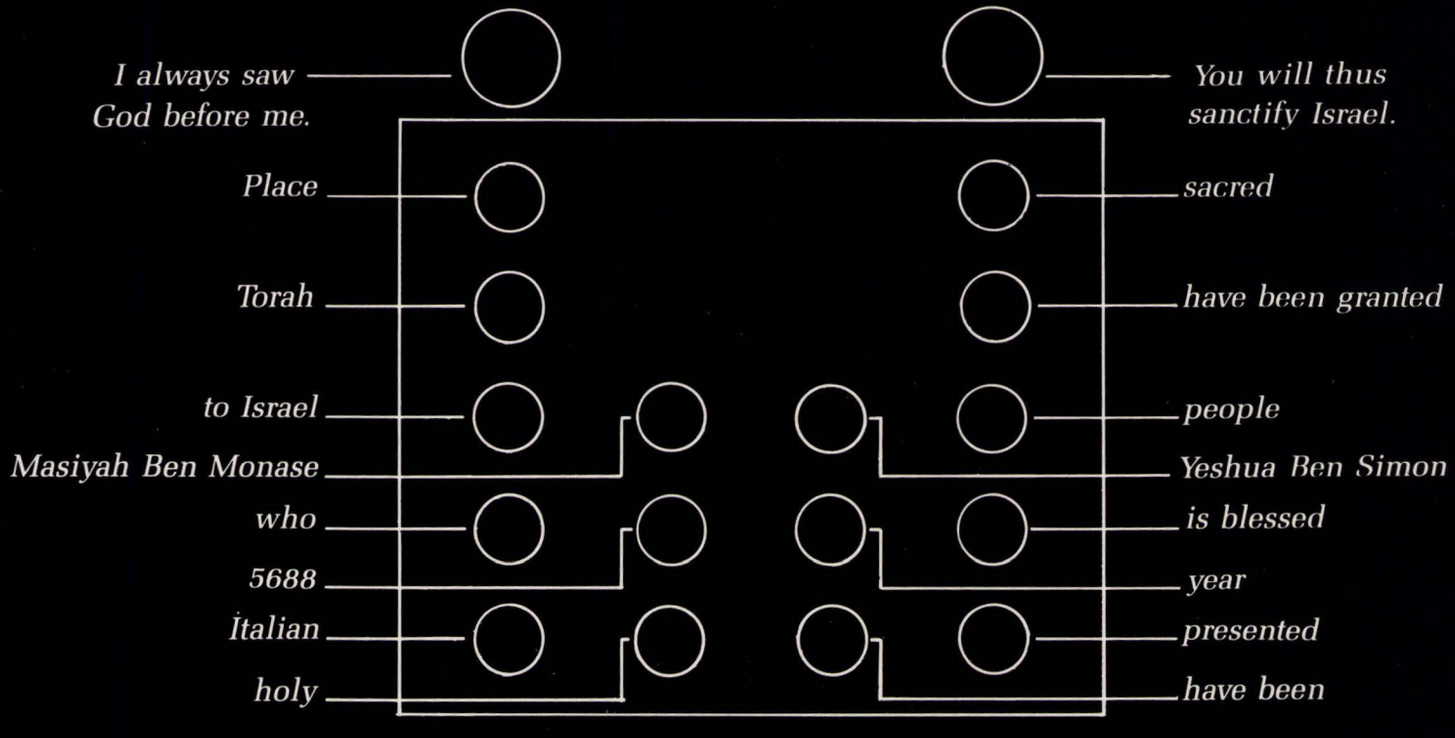
The Ehal door from the Teva.

It is said that there was a synagogue named Poulia in İstanbul in the 12th century.



This place has been presented in the name of Yeshua Ben Simon, by Italian Masiyah Ben Menase in the holy year of 5688, to the blessed people of Israel who have been granted the Sacred Torah.

An ancient Parohet and its metal decorations.





The "Ten Commandments" on the Parohet.



The Kohen symbol on the Parohet.

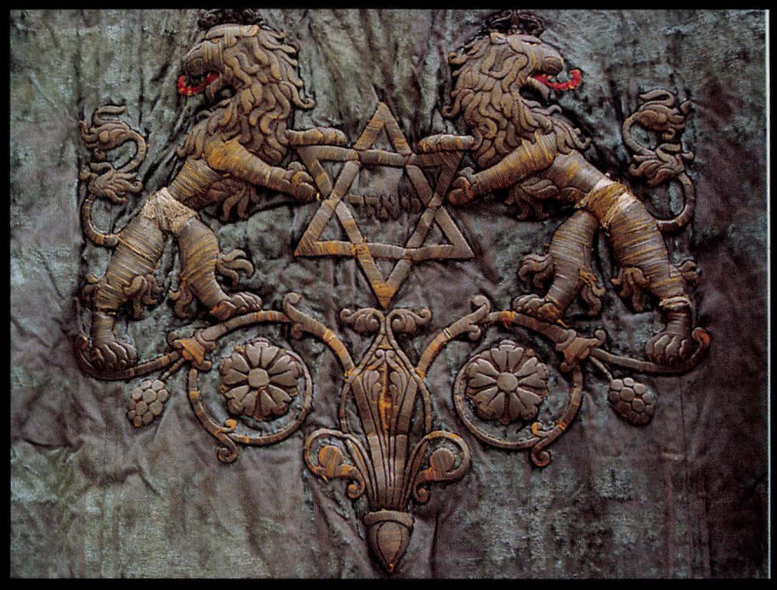


The Menorah on the Parohet.



Passage to the Ehal door.

Following the great city fires in 1633-1660, the Italian Jewish community had to leave their quarters and move to other districts of the city where they developed close contact with the Safarads. They gradually accepted the customs and traditions of the Safarads and shared the same synagogues.



Detail of an ancient Parohet.





Due to a conflict between the two communities in 1864, the Italian Jews felt the need to have a synagogue of their own; thus they laid the foundation of the Şahsuvar Synagogue in 1868 on the present Şair Ziya Paşa Street. The synagogue is still in service.



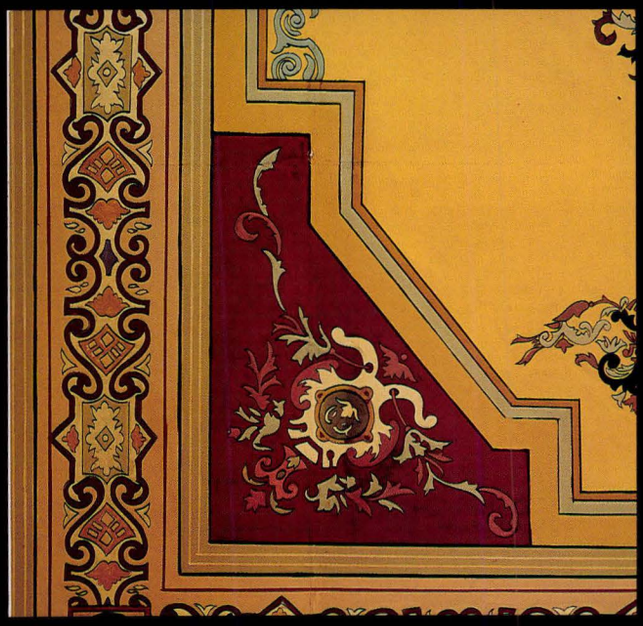
İstanbul Kuzguncuk Beit Yaakov Synagogue



View of the Synagogue from the garden.



Decorations on a niche.









Decorations on a niche.



The view of the Ehal door and inside of the Ehal from the Teva.

The Etz-ha-Hayim synagogue in Kuzguncuk is proof of a Jewish settlement in the area during the Byzantine era.

Furthermore, a large Jewish community moved to Üsküdar and in its vicinity to Dağhamam and Kuzguncuk following the great fires in 1660 and 1715. One of the two synagogue in Kuzguncuk is Etz-ha-Hayim or "Kal de abacho" Synagogue on the shore, and the second one is Virane or "Kal de Ariva" Synagogue on the hillside.



The Ehal door, Torah Roll Cases and oil lamps.

The hundred-year old Beit Yaakov Synagogue is supposed to have been built on the ruins of Etz-ha-Hayim Synagogue or the name Etz-ha-Hayim was changed to Beit Yaakov. There are two Midrashes in the synagogue courtyard. The ceiling and the niches of the synagogue have decorations based on the stories in the Torah. The synagogue has been recently restored and is now ready for service.

Following the fire in 1921, the Jews living in the Dağhamamı district also moved to Kuzguncuk and those 160 people carried the sacred property of the burnt down Dağhamam Synagogue to Kuzguncuk Synagogue.



A view of the Keters and the Rimonnims.



Mili Mitrani

A Torah roll Keter and silver decoration on the Ten Commandments.



Detail from the Rimonnim and Parohet.



Group of Torah rolls.



Group of Keters and Rimonnims.

At one time there was the Azaria Midrash at the place called "Bella Vista" on the hillside. This Midrash burnt down to ashes during the Dağhamam fire. There were other Midrashes in Kuzguncuk carrying the names of their founders such as Midrash Mizrahi, Midrash Ashkenazi, Midrash Kaymakam Efendi...



Magen David over the portal of the Synagogue



View of the Synagogue from the garden.



There is a cemetery on the Kuzguncuk hills which goes back to Byzantine period. The dates on the grave-stones show that Kuzguncuk has been a Jewish settlement for centuries.

The Têva and the Ehal door.

General view from the entrance.



The decorated ceiling over the Teva.



Mili Mitrani

Detail from an engraving.





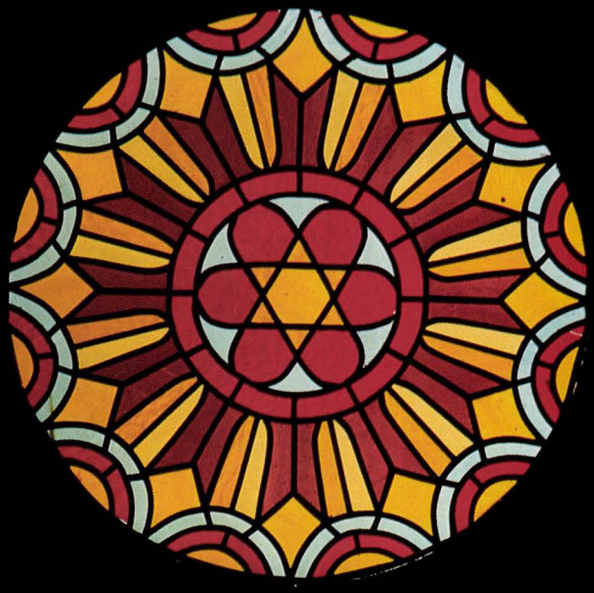
İstanbul Neve-Shalom Synagogue



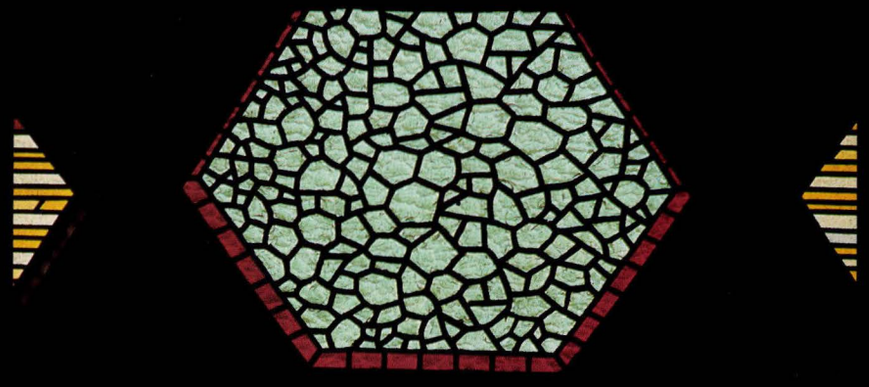
View of the Teva and Ehal door from the ladies' chamber.

How fortunate is the man who has embraced in his heart, the faith handed down on Mount Sinai. Only the honest can enter through this divine passage.

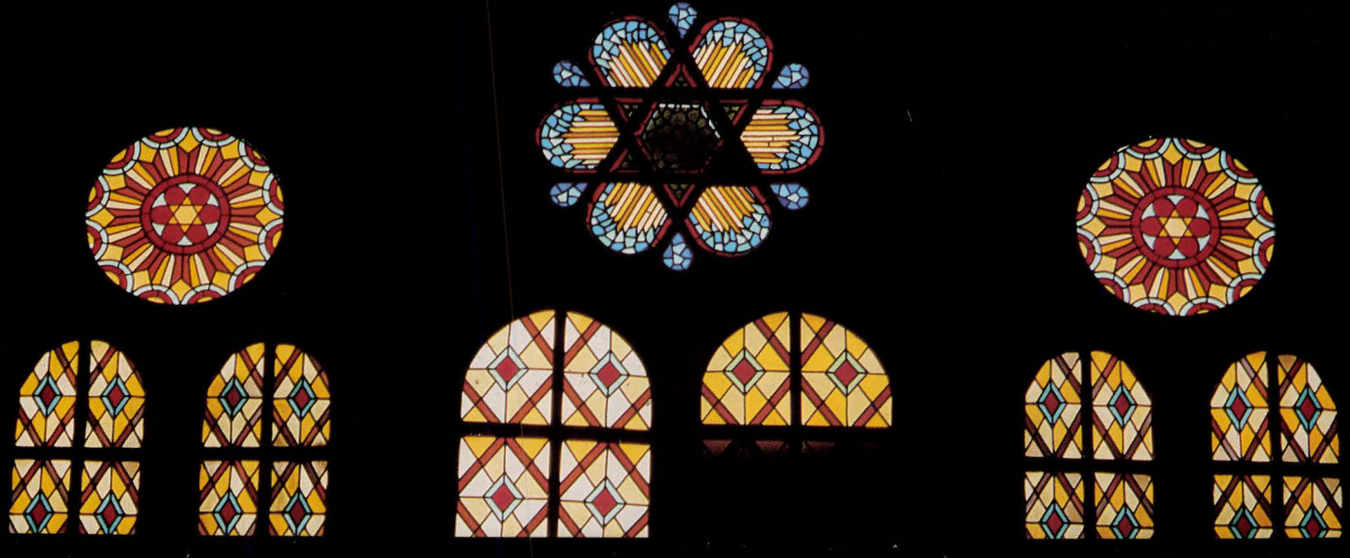
Detail of stained glass.



Detail of stained glass.



Detail of stained glass window.





General view from the entrance.



General view.



The dome and the chandelier shaped as a Magen David.



The Ascent to Teva, Ehal door and oil lamp.



İstanbul Ortaköy Etz Ha Haim Synagogue



Pediment over the garden gate.



Pediment over the portal.

This synagogue of the Byzantine period is a living monument on Ortaköy's main street, reflecting the memories of the days when the Jewish community of the district was quite large. Its arched gate with a pediment resting on two columns, can be seen from the street. The stone sphere above the plane which is at the center of the arch (called the connection stone in architecture).the circle around this sphere, the crown and the Magen David definitely lead the onlooker into a religious symbolism.



The silver left-hand on the Ehal door.



The silver right-hand on the Ehal door.

This arcade was built in 1915 by ***Eliyahu Ben Yitshak Kamhi*** *The synagogue was completely burned during a fire on the Kipur evening in 1942, and today only the "**Ehal Ha Kadesh**" stands among the green bushes and trees next to the garden wall.*



Detail of the Parohets on the Torah Rolls.



General view.



The Ten Commandments over the Ehal door of the Midrash, and an oil lamp.



Group of Torah rolls.



Adornments on the Parohets over the Torah rolls.

There were 4 Midrashes until 1942. Two of them were small and one was ruined; thus religious services were held in the great Midrash. Today there are two Midrashes, one of which is used on crowded days and the second, which has been restored to be used for daily service. This Midrash is a reflection of the burnt down synagogue, with its small dome and the coloured light entering through the stained glass panels of the dome. The Ehal Ha Kadesh was not situated as it stands now, but it was facing the wrong direction. It was turned towards the prayer direction after the restoration, and a bookcase was put into its former place in order to protect it from being stepped on.



Detail of the Parohet.



General view of the Midrash.



Detail of the Parohet.



The Ehal door and Parohet from the Teva.

The building was repaired and restored upon a firman of Sultan Abdülmecid in the 1800s, on the condition not to change or enlarge the original construction area. Ortaköy has been a Jewish settlement since the Byzantine period; and the Jews living in the district built 4 or 5 Midrashes. All of them are closed now, and some are even used as warehouses.



Rimonnims.



Metal decoration on the Parohet over the Torah rolls.



Rimonnims and a Menorah.



Detail of a Keter.

There once were two Midrashes of **Yeshiva** *Kamhis, one midrash in the orphanage and the Yeni Mahalle Synagogue in Ortaköy. The precious holdings of the Yeni Mahalle Synagogue, which is now used as a storage house, are preserved in the Ortaköy Synagogue.*



Detail of metal decoration on the Parohet over the Torah Rolls.



İstanbul Sirkeci Synagogue



View of the Sirkeci Midrash.



Rimonnims.



This synagogue was built during the Ottoman period by Avram Geron on his own plot of land. This 80-90 year old building was first used as a warehouse for sugar stocks. Later, the Jews who settled in Sirkeci turned the building into a synagogue. The building was first formed by two sheds. This synagogue, with just a zinc sheet over two posts, did not have any doors or windows in 1938. On Feast Days, canvases were stretched over the garden, thus enlarging the synagogue. A regular building was erected in 1943, and the synagogue reached its present appearance in 1957.



Nearly 60-70 years ago, there was a Georgian synagogue nearby, and the building next to the synagogue was used as a school. Around 2000 Jews used to live in Sirkeci until the 1940s. Since Sirkeci is on the coast, it was on the crossroads and the meeting place of the Jewish tradesmen from other cities and neighbouring countries; therefore it gradually became the settlement for Jews. The Jews who worked for the Railway Company also lived in Sirkeci. When the Jews of Thrace moved to İstanbul, and the Jews who lost their homes during the Hasköy fire settled in Sirkeci, the district's Jewish population increased remarkably.



General view of the Synagogues.

Today, this synagogue mostly serves the Jewish businessmen who have their offices and shops in Sirkeci.



İstanbul
Şişli Beit İsrael
Synagogue



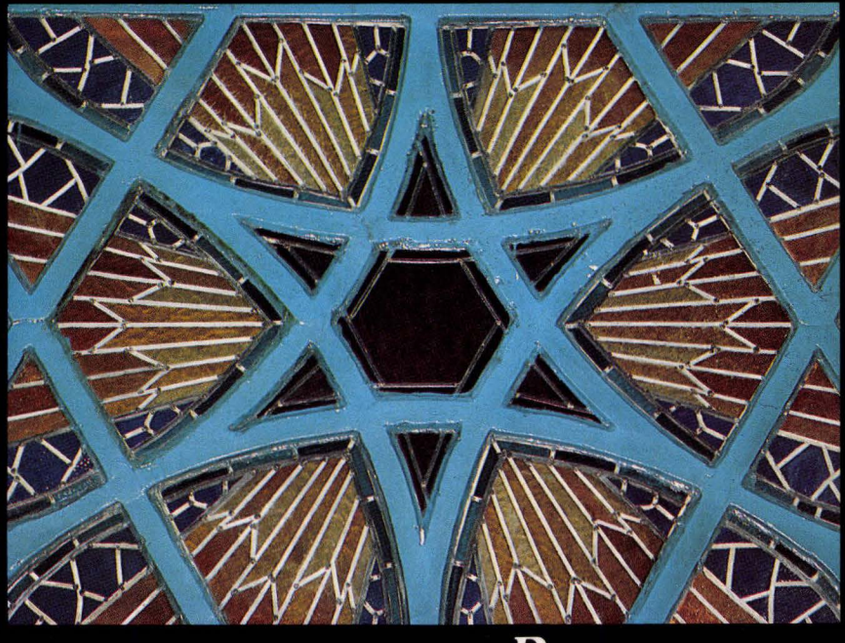


General view.

The Jews who moved to Şişli from various districts of İstanbul and especially from Beyoğlu (Pera) during the last fifty years, first rented a house in order to hold their religious services. When the Jewish population in the Şişli district increased, the rented house could not meet the demand; and consequently, it became necessay to built a synagogue.



General view.



Mili Mirani

Detail of stained glass.



View of the exterior.



General view.



Detail of stained glass windows.



General view.



An oil lamp.

An architectural design contest was organized for the synagogue. An architect named Aram Deragobyan won the contest and started to build the synagogue. The Beit Israel Synagogue in Şişli was built over the plot where there once was a thread factory. The synagogue, which was put into service on the Passover Feast in 1952, is a well kept synagogue serving the Jews in Şişli and its surroundings.

Mili Mitrani



Ascent to the Teva, Ehal door and a part of the dome.



İstanbul Sultanhamam Çorapçı Han Synagogue



Entrance of the Çorapçı Han Synagogue.



Detail of a Parohet decoration.



Detail of a Parohet decoration.



Teva and Ehal door.

This synagogue was built nearly 110 years ago in the large Çorapçı Han (socks and stocking market) in Sultanhamam by the Russian Jews. This synagogue was meant to serve a rather large Jewish community living in the Sultanhamam area during the 19th century. Later on it was closed for a while, but it was reopened and put into service after 1985.



Looking from the Midrash onto the Teva, Ehal door and the library holding old manuscripts.



Detail of Parohet decorations over the Torah rolls.



Group of Torah rolls, Rimonnims and Keters.



A Rimonnim and a Keter.



Details of Rimonnims.





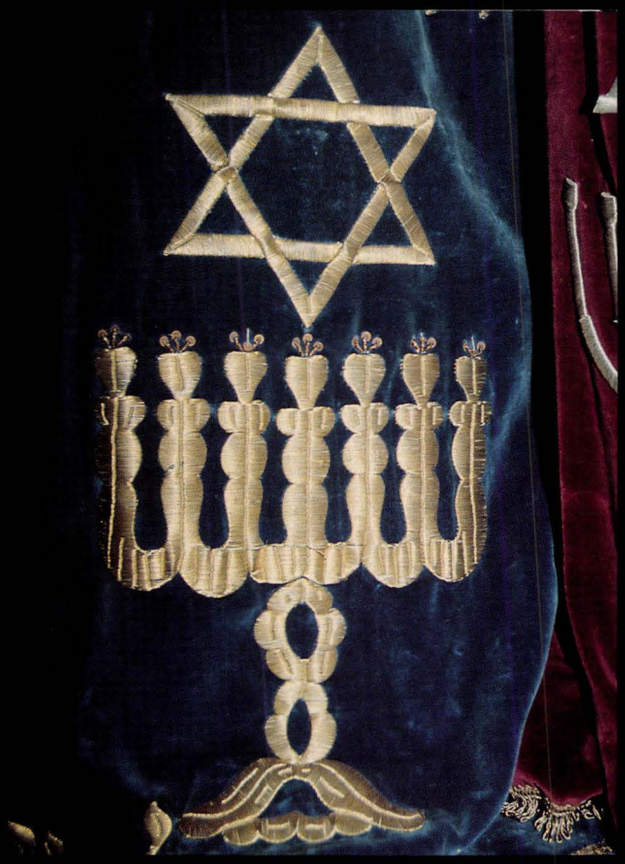
Rimonnims.



Torah rolls.



Rimonnims.



Detail of the Parohet over the Torah rolls.



Detail from the Parohet.



İstanbul Yeniköy Synagogue



Exterior view of the Synagogue.



Detail of a Parohet.



Detail of a Parohet.



Parohet.



Parohet.



Parohet.

Mostly the Turkish Greeks used to live in the Yeniköy district on the Bosphorous. According to the travel book of Evliya Çelebi, no Jews lived in Yeniköy, since they could not get along with the Greeks. But as time passed Yeniköy became a popular summer village for the Jews. Consequently, the Jews who spent their summers in Yeniköy, started to feel the need for a temple for their services on Shabat and Feast Days.



Ascent to the Ehal door.



View of the Teva.



Silver money-box.



Silver money-box.



Metal money-box.

When Count Abraham de Camondo also started to spend his summers in Yeniköy, he had a small synagogue be built there. Following the building of the synagogue, a small Jewish community was formed in Yeniköy.



The Torah rolls seen from the Ehal.



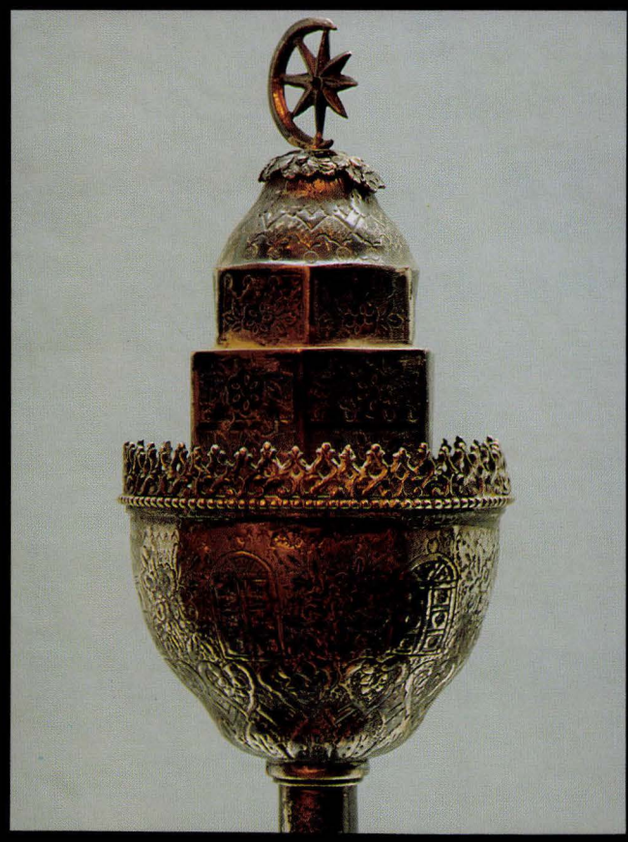
Rimonnim.



Rimonnim with pinnacle.



Rimonnim.



Rimonnim.



Rimonnim.



Rimonnim made in Tibettan style.



Detail of the Parohets.



Rimonnims.



Rimonnims.



Detail of the Parohet.



Rimonnims and adornments.



Rimonnims.



Karaït (Karaims) Synagogue



Karait (Karaims)

The Karaits (Karaims) is a Jewish sect separated from the Rabbinical Jews nearly 1000 years ago, as a consequence of ideological conflicts on the interpretations of the Torah, and of certain political reasons.

Karaits accept the Torah as the one and only basis of Judaism and reject the interpretations and commentaries on the Torah, namely they reject the traditional Rabbinical literature. In other words, Karaits' main principle is to attain validity only to the Torah. And accordingly, the Talmud literature is considered as personal interpretations of the Rabbis, which are not true and valid.



This movement which takes its name from the word "Kara" meaning "to read" in Hebrew, was started by Anan Ben David during the 8th century in Babylon. Anan Ben David repudiated the Talmud and founded a new sect. This sect is named after its founder, as Anaism and the community is called Anaits.

Anan Ben David who wished to accomplish a reform in Judaism and who wanted to establish an easy and convenient religious system, could not lessen the burdens of religious duties, but instead he created a system of rules and actions which was more complex and more difficult to practice. As time went by, various Karaist groups were formed who interpereted the Torah differently.

The sect which is now known as Karaism, was soundly based in the 9th century by Binyain Nihavendi (from the Persian town of Nihavend) and became an ideological doctrine. Karaits took up a more daring approach in the 10th century and started to spread their doctrine, during this period, Karait scholars wrote many books mostly in Arabic. The central point of the movement which was started and developed in Iran and its vicinities, was shifted to Anatolia and Europe during late 11th century.

When the Eastern Karait school lost its prevalence at the end of the 11th century, some missionaries started their activities in the West. Sidi İbn Altaros became the leader of the movement in Spain. But the Castilian rulers influenced by the Rabbinical forces, ousted Karaism from Spain. On the other hand, Karaism greatly influenced a wide circle in Byzantium and a large Karait community was formed particularly in Constantinople. Consequently, a rich Karait literature was developed.

Byzantium became the center of world Karaism in the 13th century.

The great Torah specialist and scholar Joseph ha-Rofe lived during that period and created the classical works of Karaism. He contributed to the sect a liturgical system and order which is still valid.

As far as we can gather, Rabbinical Judaism and Karaist Judaism co-existed in balance during the Byzantine period.



But this situation was altered after the Ottoman conquest of İstanbul in 1453. The Jews who were expelled from Spain, carried the Jewish cultural life to new summits on Turkish land from the 16th century on.

During the rise of the Ottomans (1500s), the Rabbinical Jews largely cooperated with Karaits. Great scholars like Komtino and Mizrahi, let the Karait students into their schools. After the 16th century, the Karaits on Ottoman land, became inert as to clerical influence, just like the Mesopotamian, Iranian and Egyptian Karaits.

Then, the center of Karaism shifted to Crimea, Lituania and Russia. Today Karaism preserves its characteristics and survives as a religious sect in Southeastern Europe and Middle East.





Karaits who lived in Pera (e.g. Beyoğlu) during the Byzantine period, later moved to Karaköy district. It is supposed that the name Karaköy was derived from Karaits. They settled around the Golden Horn, and particularly in Hasköy in the 17th century.

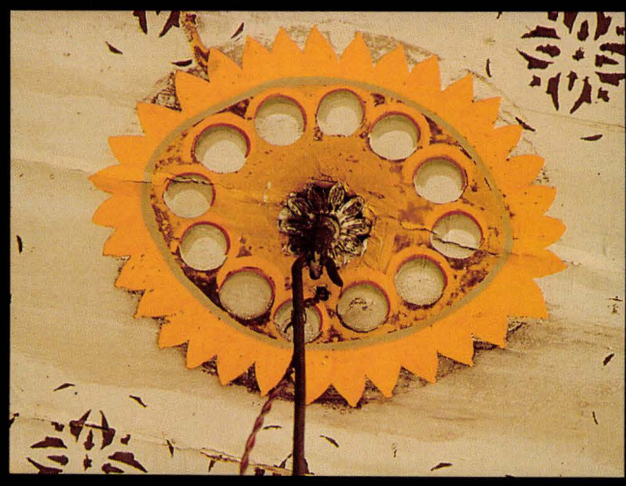
Karaits had a Bet-Din of their own different from that of the traditional Rabbinical structure. They made their own decisions and put them into practice. While there were nearly 1000 Karait families in Istanbul during the 19th century, today there are onIy 50 families.

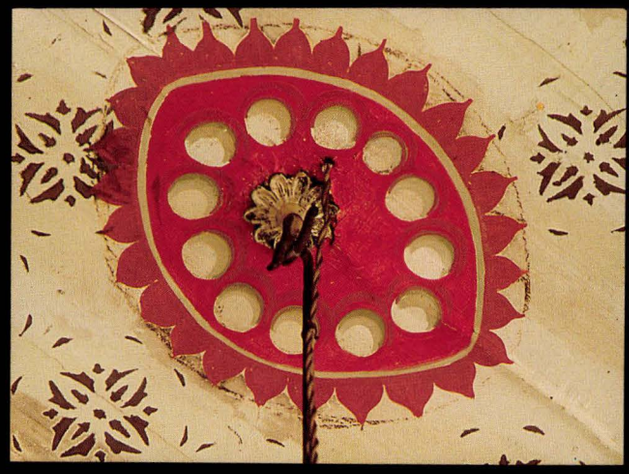
They had two synagogues, both of which were in Hasköy. The larger of those synagogues burned down to ashes during a great fire. The remaining small synagogue, is still in service.

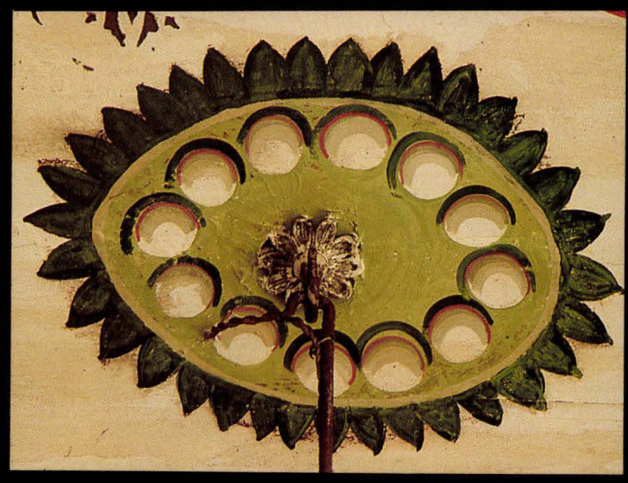
The synagogues have the Ten Commandments inscribed on tablets.

** In accordance with the Torah rule of "Take off your shoes in holy places", no one enters the synagogue with shoes. The floors are carpet-covered.*









* *Karaits do not consider the Minyan principle (to have a group of at least 10 men in order to hold a religious ceremony). Even an individual can go to the synagogue and pray alone. They do not have Bar-Mitzvah celebrations. They have replaced the Rabbinical prayers with new ones collected from the passages in the Torah. Tallets and caps are worn in the synagogue.*



** They do not recite the "Kaddish" prayer at funeral ceremonies, since "Kaddish" was converted from Aramaic by the Rabbis.*

** In accordance with the Torah phrase of "I am calling thee from the depths of the earth", the synagogues are built a few steps below ground level.*



** They do not celebrate the Hanuka Feast, since it is not ruled in the Torah. They celebrate the other Feast days, but usually on different days from the Rabbinical Jews because their calendar is different. Only on Leap Years when February is 29 days, the Feast days coincide.*

Man is a part of the universe.

The re-coalescence of matter which was spread through the cosmos by energy waves during the Big Bang 15 billion years ago, and formed the galaxies and stars, led to the birth of our present universe.

After the Big Bang, the energy waves first accidentally formed nebulae in space. Then, during the condensation of the nebulae, the energy waves were drawn together by gravity and turned into matter. Again as a consequence of gravitational attraction, innumerable particles of matter were clumped together to form the galaxies and stars.

Consequently life started in our Solar System, forming us, the psychosociobiological organism. Thus the evolution of Mankind began. With the awareness (sensibility) of a connection between the great formation and himself Man has built the bridge between himself and eternity within the limits of his wisdom up to now. The name of this bridge is Art. The formation of thought in the universe had different dimensions and forms in respect to different communities. These new forms created particular characters, a particular essence.

This book presents the essence of the concrete formation of one of the particular characters of human history in the universe.

İstanbul, Ulus May 1st, 1992.

ersin ALOK