

Friends In The Park



This picture was taken in 1944. We are at a park with a friend from the neighborhood. There was a big park around our house. That day we had struck poses with different friends. There should be other pictures but who knows where now. The one next to me is my friend from the neighborhood, Beki. I cannot remember her last name. It was either Hayim or something similar. We liked this friend a lot. She was very poor, her father had died. She had a mother and 5 siblings. I would not eat at home, I sustained myself with only water. My mother would invite this girl home to eat, just so she would eat and I would see her and eat too. We were very close, I don't know from pity or love. Currently when we go to Büyükada, we meet from time to time and continue with an infinite love. Whenever we meet, I undoubtedly invite her to my home and we reminisce. In my childhood I do not know the population of Jews in our neighborhood, Bedrettin Mahallesi but the majority was Jewish. I think there were around 50 families. The Turks on the other hand lived one street behind. Our vicinity was all Jewish. It was mostly like a ghetto. Kuledibi was a ghetto. The area we lived in was also a ghetto. When we were young, celebrating events such as *noche de shabbat* (Friday evening), attending synagogue on Shabbat morning, kashrut, holidays, were all done together with our neighbors and relatives. We attended synagogue like everyone else, my mother would take us on every holiday, every Shabbat, every Selichot no matter what. The upstairs floors of the house we lived in were all Jewish. Besides, the future wife of my older brother and his in-laws were all our neighbors, we were always with them. They were so religious that we would get together at night, towards dawn and go to the synagogue to pray. I learned everything concerning my religion from them. I learned piety, kashrut, everything I did or applied, I learned from them. Other than them, I learned Hebrew and religious studies in school. In addition I went to Mahazike Tora, there was Nesim Behar then, I learned religion from him. As far as holidays are concerned I like all of them.

The Jews here had different jobs. But then the rich and the poor live in the same area and had the same conversation. There was no separation. Some of them were factory owners, some grocery store owners, butchers, water sellers, produce sellers. These would come to our door, that is how we did our shopping. There were merchants. Printers of cloth would come to our home. My mother prepared my dowry from a Jewish printer, she bought sheets, comforters, fabrics and underwear.