

Zelda Ers

ZELDA ERS

Istanbul

Turkey

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Zelda Ers was born in 1934 in Istanbul. She has been living alone in a flat in Gayrettepe for the last 10-12 years since she lost her husband. Since her older son Salvo lives in the building right next door, she is not lonely. She is a very warm, pleasant and cordial person. I have to say that she is also very hospitable. The day I went to interview her, I was invited to lunch along with her son Izzet who is my friend, we had lunch all together. My work with her took place in a very pleasant atmosphere.

Family background

Growing Up

During the War

After the War

Glossary

Family background

From what I've been told my great-great grandfathers were all from Balat, I do not know where they came from and who they are before that. I don't have stories about them. I just know that they were very very honorable people.

Among my grandparents, I did not know any on the paternal side, I don't have much information about them. My paternal grandfather's name was Izak Levi. My maternal grandmother's name was Zimbul Levi. I do not know her maiden name. I know they lived in Istanbul, spoke Ladino [1](#), and that they were religious.

My maternal grandfather, Smuel Behar was a rabbi, he was either the rabbi of Apollon or Zulfaris, he was a great rabbi. He was a person with great power. My maternal grandmother was Lea Behar. I do not know her maiden name or their birthdates. They were from Balat. The financial situation of my mother's father was very good. They earned their money from the rabbinate. Their life changed after World War 2, their sons Albert Behar and Vili Behar left for the United States and took their mom and dad with them. Only my mother remained here. They used to speak Ladino.



I did not meet them, they left before I was born. From what my mother told me they were very respectable people. My mother's dad was a respectable, knowledgeable person who always helped the people around him as much as he could. He was not a person who told jokes, he was a serious, quiet, esteemed person, he rarely laughed. They were always involved in the synagogue, their constant job was learning, obtaining more knowledge. His real job was an antiques dealer but I don't know if he had a store. They talked Ladino amongst themselves. They also spoke French because they studied in the schools of Alliance [2](#).

At the time they wore old-fashioned clothes. I saw this in pictures but later I have no idea where my mother put these pictures. My grandfather had both a moustache and a beard. He used both a yarmulke and a hat. Yarmulke underneath, the hat over it. My grandmother did not wear a wig like orthodox ladies, she always wore a scarf, both at home and outside. She wore old-fashioned clothes, she did not have a special hat or any jewelry.

I do not have any information about a house or flat that they owned because they had already moved away to the United States when I was born. They observed religion piously since they were a rabbi's family. They applied the Jewish traditions completely. Certainly they observed the rules of kashrut and the Sabbath. Since he was a rabbi, there is nothing to say. They continually went to the synagogue. They celebrated the Jewish holidays at home.

I do not know the political views of my grandfather. I don't think he belonged to any political party or organisation. But because they were very civilized people, maybe they belonged to a social or cultural club.

Their relations with their neighbors was very good. Their relations with everyone was good. My grandfather was someone who always helped out, he would host people who could or could not afford celebrating, in his home during holidays. Passover etc. And feed them. Of course I am talking about things I have heard.

Their neighbors were Jewish, I don't have information about their friends.

I did not get to know my father, Yesua Levi, since he died when I was young. I am guessing that since the family was from Balat, that is where he was born. I know he was 2-3 years older than my mother, so he could be born in 1898. From what I have been told, my father was a very smart, wise and talkative person. He was very understanding and mellow. His education level was middle school. There was a Maccabi school then, he was from Maccabi. His mother tongue was Ladino. I don't know how religious he was. My father was a tailor. He was a great tailor. He would saw pants for officers. My mother tells me that he would go to the military and saw silk-lined suits for them. My father always lived in Istanbul and died in 1934 in Istanbul.

My mother Janti Levi (Behar) was born in Istanbul in 1901. She was smart like my father, talkative, she was not serious or quiet. My mother used to be mellow, she hardened later on. She had a good rapport with her neighbors, even though she worked all day, she was a person full of love. She would worry about feeding her children. She made sacrifices so her children could live well.

She lost a child in a traffic accident. My older brother was 36 years old. My brother Izak was married, had two daughters. He had a very very successful business. He sold glassware and china. They were 3 partners, I was newly married then. He opened a store for my husband and my other older brother. So they could have jobs. My brother was very rich. My mother was like a queen in my

brother's home, they lived together. My brother had everything. At the time, (he died in 1960, a little before the hanging of Menderes [3](#)), he bought flats, bought a car, no one had a telephone then, he bought one, crystal chandeliers, he was that rich. One day his car breaks down, at the time Vatan caddesi (street) was being newly built, an Israeli firm, Soley Bone was constructing the street. He gets up and goes all the way there, takes his car to a repairshop. He had a clerk, he says "come with me, we will go and come back together". But the clerk declined. He goes alone. He takes the car to Vatan caddesi. And there he hits a tractor trailer. The steering wheel hits his heart. He gets out of the car, he is fine, he was talking. He walked to Capa, he went to the hospital walking. As soon as he entered the hospital, "save me, I feel very bad, I had an accident, my car stayed there, help me" he says. They kept him there till the evening. While waiting he had internal bleeding and died there. He was 36 years old, he left behind two girls. One was 10 years old, the other 6. My mother was very distressed and became agitated, cranky after this. She developed diabetes and other diseases.

My mother's education was very good. There used to be a school in Kasimpasa, if I remember correctly, Alliance. French was spoken there all the time. She studied in that school. Her mother tongue was Ladino, in addition she spoke French, German and Greek. My mom was a woman who knew about everything. She was also very religious because her father was a rabbi. She applied all the Jewish traditions. She observed kashrut rules. Every Friday, every holiday and every Saturday morning she went to the synagogue. She had holiday celebrations at home. We would combine our food with neighbors and such and celebrate together.

My mother was a tailor, she helped her husband. She sewed at home while my father was alive. I do not know how my mother and father met, I was never told, probably they must have married by a matchmaker because that is how it was then. They married in Istanbul around 1918-1919, in the Zulfaris synagogue.

The financial situation of my family was mediocre. The house we lived in had one room. Our house was like a large commercial building. When you went up one flight of stairs, there were lots of rooms. Every family lived in one room no matter how many people. There was no bathroom, no kitchen, there was a hallway, let me call it a corridor. There was a shared space there for all the rooms, and we would cook our food there.

There was a Turkish style toilet on the first floor, we shared it. The bathroom was a neighbor's, we went to her house to use the bathroom, we shared it. We did not have running water. We carried it in buckets from the fountain. We carried water to clean the bathroom. Cleaning was done by turns, everyday one of the neighbors did it. There were huge huge mice in the bathrooms, we would make noise, bang on the door so they would scurry away and we could go in. There was a big tree right across our house and there was a source of water around this tree, it wasn't a fountain, it was like a stream. Because we lived together with Turks, they always had their turn first, the Jews were last. But they would feel pity that I was so young, they would give me permission to fill the buckets. This water was only used for cleaning and the bathroom. We bought water for drinking and cooking from the water-seller. We heated up bucketfuls of water to bathe. We poured water with a bowl over our head. For heating, there was a stove, a brazier, we used coal. That is how it was many years ago. There was poverty then.

We did not have a garden. Our neighborhood was a poor neighborhood, there were no luxuries. We lived alongside Turks. The Turks loved us, we loved them back. We would visit them on holidays, they would visit us on our holidays. We had no pets in our home. We did not have helpers like servants, maids, nannies or laundry women.

We had books at home. We had religious books and French books. My mother was partial to French novels, usually she read romantic novels. She liked reading. She would recommend books to me, she wanted very much for me to read. I used to read. When my mother became ill, I could not continue. At the time the middle one of my older brothers was in the military and sent a letter. For whatever reason, he asked for 30,000 liras as emergency money. I was around 8 or 9 years old then, I don't remember well. My mother found a way to find and send the money but she was so scared that the fear paralyzed her legs, she couldn't walk. There weren't many doctors then. There was a pious woman then, she healed with prayer and said to my mother "I will cure you but you cannot leave the house for 9 days, no one can see you". I don't remember what she did, but I was obliged to leave school and stay in that room. They would bring us food from the outside. The neighbors would bring us meals and no one saw my mother for those 9 days. On the ninth day she got up in the morning, went to the hamam and returned home walking.

We didn't read newspapers at home. They did not have the habit of going to the library either. They did not have active duties in the community. The poor ones, they struggled to earn enough money to live on. My mother struggled to raise us.

I don't have information about the period of my father's military service. But I have information about my father-in-law's. My deceased father-in-law, Eliyazer Ers, was a very knowledgeable, educated man. He studied in Alliance like my mom. He was a wise and well-read person. He would always tell us: "I went into exile. They sent me to the Russian border for military service. There was a war then". I think that was around World War 1. "I only had a mother, no one else" he says. "I had a sibling, he starved to death", he always told us that. He starved to death, he died here. My father-in-law's family was all from Balat. He says that he had 4.5-5 years of military service. "We were in Russia. Then I could not return to Turkey. I stayed in exile. I had no money, nothing, I could not return" was what he explained. This happened during military service. He always told us that. Because I had not known the love of a father, I had a very good relationship with him. He had a lot of good qualities, he would come and tell me: "We came to Turkey with a convoy, I did not have a penny. My military service was supposed to be two years but I could not return even though World War 1 had ended. I went back to my neighborhood, I could not find my mother or my sibling. They died of poverty and starvation. I was alone".

My deceased mother-in-law, Anetta Ers, was a little ignorant, she was a peasant woman. She would say: "Friends and neighbors got together and married me to him. I did not have a spectacular life. My father-in-law's job was to inscribe on tombstones things like poems. He was a sought-out person.

My father had two siblings named Fortune Levi and Albert Levi. The only thing I know about his older sister Fortune was that she would cook for a royal British family. She had great knowledge about food. She had a daughter named Deyzi, when her daughter grew up, she decided she couldn't provide a dowry for her since she has lost her husband, so she left for Israel around 1975 and died there. Her daughter currently resides there.

His brother was a tailor. He had a daughter and a son named Sara and Pepo. He died around 1975-1980. I have no further information about them.

My mother had two siblings named Albert and Vili. My uncle Albert was in the business of wholesale nuts in the United States. I don't have many details about them because I never met them.

Vili was in the carwash business in the United States. He married Seydi Behar who was an American citizen. He had three children named Leonor, July and Sami. I know he died in 1960. I met all the children when we went on our trip to the United States.

Both my uncles were studying in Istanbul, in the Maccabi. The name of the B'nai Brith school was Maccabi then. This was happening at the time of Hitler. They saw that the situation was very bad, my mother was married then. My uncles ran away from school, they went directly to Spain. From there they emigrated to the United States. They both found a woman each, to be able to stay in the United States. Both passed on. Their life there was wonderful. At first they struggled but then their situation improved. They lived in Miami. They remembered their sister 40 years after they left, my mother. They tried calling by phone, couldn't locate her, they called the community, they said we are looking for such a person, they couldn't. They couldn't reach us. Finally one of them gets up and comes to Turkey, I had just given birth to Izzet then.

My younger uncle came, found my mother and it was a big event. In reality my mother contacted them through the American consulate. That is how my younger uncle came here. Then he took my mother to the United States. My mother lived with them for a while. She lived well but returned with yearning for her children. In the meanwhile my uncle became a cardiac patient after he married his son and told his son Semi Behar: "you will take care of my sister and the children" as a last request. "If necessary, bring the whole family here" he said. Appropriately, my older brother applied to the American consulate to become an immigrant. But his immigration paper came after he died. In the meantime my uncle died and his son, as soon as he married Deni Behar, -I don't know her maiden name-, came to visit Turkey around 1970's and found us and my mother. We had pleasant days with them, and for about 10-11 years, they came every year. They stayed with us, we did not let them stay in a hotel, we opened our house.

One time, they said it is our turn, they invited us to settle there, first come and see they said, and arranged everything, up to the airplane tickets. And we went there and lived there for 40 days. We stayed in New York for 15 days and in Miami the rest of the time. I loved it there and I wished a better life for my children, I wanted to settle but my husband did not want it. If you keep me here I will die he said. In reality he was right, it was a very calm and quiet place. The place was full of villas. There wasn't much to do. At best, we went out on a motorboat on the weekends to fish. My husband did not want this lifestyle. But they insisted and said "you are coming" and arranged a house for us, a carwash business, and a language school for my son Izzet so he can learn and direct the family. He prepared everything. But they did not let Izzet. The ambassador did not let him. They wanted a house, they wanted money in the bank. They even called and said I will send a permit, I will provide everything he said. But neither he was able to do it, nor anyone gave a visa to Izzet. How could we leave Izzet behind we said and we couldn't go, we stayed. What a pity that we had everything ready. It wasn't to be.

My older brother Izak Levi was born in Istanbul Sishane, in 1921. He studied in the Jewish highschool, completed junior high. He did not go to highschool. He raised himself since he was a

smart and active person. He worked in Taksim in a textile factory at the age of 17. The owner in the textile factory was a Druze, named Cikvasvili. He worked there until he went to the military. While working there he got engaged to a girl named Merkada Eskenazi. The person who became his wife later on, Korin Leon lived above us and was very much in love with my brother. She heard that he got engaged and was very upset. She sends her mother over and says to my mom: "why were we not made aware, whereas Korin loves Izak very much". My mom relates this to my brother. After a while, they weren't getting along with Merkada and they separated. Following this my brother got engaged to Korin, they stayed engaged for 7 years. Since they were engaged so young, their engagement lasted a long time, in the meantime he went to the military. He had a good military service in Ankara. They marry a while after he got back. She was a very good woman. She loved me like a sister, took care of me when my mom wasn't there, we lived in the same house. She was 10-12 years older than me. They had a daughter named Janti a year after they got married, and 4 years later another daughter, Suzet. He was very successful at his job during this time. His job was boxmaking in Eminonu. He had a lot of acquaintances in the market. He had a friend, Albert Morhayim, and there was another one, the son-in-law of a pharmacist at the kal de los frankos (ashkenazi synagogue), I don't remember the name, they became partners in the glassware business. They obtained a big warehouse in Eminonu. At the time the crystals from Chekoslovakia were famous, they were selling those. They became incredibly rich. When they were married they lived in Kuledibi, they attracted attention because of their wealth. They bought a house, they bought a car, they had everything. Ten years pass and the accident happens.

My other older brother Albert Levi was born in Istanbul Sishane in 1925. He also completed junior high in the Jewish highschool and started working. There wasn't much studying then. After finishing school he became an ironworker until military service. Later he did his military service in Malatya. When he returned, he opened up a business of children's bicycles. He married someone named Sara Bicaci from Tekirdag. She was a very good woman. They had two daughters, Jaklin and Meri. They lived in the 6th flat. With time the girls grew up. After the events of September 6-7⁴, emigrating to Israel was common. First let's send the oldest girl so she can learn the language, then we will follow he asid. The older girl Jaklin left in 1962, they went in 1964. They currently live there. Now he is retired. We still communicate but we are not close because of beatings that happened when I was young.

I tried to forget these events, I had a lot of therapy, with time I forgot all of it. After my brother left in 1964, my mother went to stay with him in 1968. Our financial situation wasn't that good. We were struggling to raise our kids. My husband's business wasn't that good and he also needed to take care of his parents. My mother wanted to go there. At the time the Israeli government would provide a house for the immigrants, they would provide money. And she went there. My older brother said "I will take care of my mother, do not give her a house, give me the money". My mother settled in my brother's house. She lived there but couldn't get along and left to rent. The situation became so bad that my mother took to crying in the streets, lying on the benches. I was going crazy reading the letters. In 1977 I told my husband that I had to go take care of this no matter what. I left and went there. Truly, I found my mother in a deplorable state. I went to my brother and said "I am not in a position to talk, you are more powerful than me", I boosted his ego. "I have two sons at home, my husband, his parents, who should my spouse take care of first. My mother has not been well since the death of my brother, anyways, she needs a doctor, she needs medicine, I cannot afford all that. Please treat her well, who knows how many years she has left, it

is a pity” I said. In the meantime my older son Salvo has an accident with our car, and my husband writes me a letter and calls me back immediately. I left everyone and went back. Later I received a letter from my mother: “What did you do to these people, you put them in line, my grandchildren are coming to see me, my son comes, my daughter-in-law comes” she was telling me. I told her that I took care of it using kind words. My mother was very happy that I had taken care of the situation and prayed to me. But a short while after everything was o.k., my mother died.

Growing Up

I, Zambul Ers (Levi) was born in Istanbul in 1934. I never went to preschool, my mother and siblings raised me, there was no such things as nannies with us. I was mostly alone through my childhood. After my father’s passing, my mother started to go out to work. She was a tailor. She worked and I stayed alone in the house. My childhood was very bad, I had a very bad childhood. All this stayed in my subconscious, I had a lot of therapy after my husband died. The psychologist revealed that it all was because of my childhood.

I was someone afraid of the dark, who went to bed hungry, then. I would fall asleep before my mom got home. The younger of my older brothers, Albert was a harsh person, I suffered because of him. He was very strict, he beat me up a lot. These beatings created psychological problems for me. My older brother left for the military after a while. My mother would prepare green beans for me when I was 6 and say you will cook the green beans. My sister-in-law lived upstairs, the fiancée of my older brother and her parents. I would go to them and beg them to show me how to cook it. They would tell me do this this way and that, that way, they would instruct me. I would cook coals on top of a brazier to cook food, and when it wasn’t done, my brother would come and beat me. My mother who could have stopped him would come home late, and when she did, I was asleep. We did not have running water, I would pour water over his hands with a bowl, he would slap me with the back of his hand and blood would pour down my face. I was around 7 years old or younger. The neighbors would intervene “what are you doing, you will kill this girl”. It was as if he was exacting revenge on our poverty. I don’t know what to say. All this created psychological problems with me with time. I became a girl who cried constantly, who never found pleasure in anything. At the time, the children, girls and boys, we would all sit outside our doorsteps, a little conversation, a few laughs, a little singing, we would pass the time like this. Because there was nothing else to do then. In the meantime I grew up, started working. I put on airs about having grown up. I started having self-confidence. My older brother returned from military service. He was a very good person. He acted like a father to us. In the meantime the younger brother went to the military, I reached puberty at the age of 12. Of course, I flourished, I am walking with girl and boyfriends, I am talking to them, I forgot about the past. In the meantime the neighbors are telling my older brother what the younger one had been doing. One day my younger brother came from the military. My friends were calling me from downstairs, Zelda, come out to the door so we can talk a little bit. My brother immediately stopped me saying where are you going. And I replied that I was already grown up, that he couldn’t tell me what to do anymore, to go mind his own business. How dare I talk back, he starts hitting me and hitting me. My older brother hears the sounds from upstairs. Right away neighbors gather to check the commotion and my older brother beats my younger brother with a stick in his hand and this was the last time. He could not touch me again. But these events had an effect on me, they stayed in my subconscious. For a long time I could not enjoy anything, I will not forget that.

I went to the second coeducational school, this was a Jewish school. My favorite class was mathematics. Ask me today I will answer you rightaway. I liked math and Turkish a lot. In the classroom, I remember, the richest kids sat in front, the poorest in the very back. The teachers arranged the seating system. However, the ones in the very back were more successful than the ones in front. I liked all the teachers in general but we had a teacher named Madam Benyakar, she was very tough, she would always beat us with a ruler. But not me. She beat the ones who couldn't answer, she would hit thir fingers with the ruler, right on top of their knuckles. That is why I did not like her but I liked the rest. I was so well-behaved that I would get presents like notebooks and pencils, the school would clothe me and feed me.

I could only attend third grade in primary school. That year my mother was very sick and one of my brothers was a soldier. I had lost my father at a young age. My mother was very ill, her legs became paralyzed, she wasn't able to walk, I think her legs became immobilized from fear and she was unable to walk. That is why I stopped going to school after 3rd grade so I could take care of my mother. I started working at 9 years of age, I started caring for my mother at 9 years of age. There was a pantyhose factory in Kasimpasa belonging to some Druzes, I started working there. First I started working in the weaving, I would attach labels. Then I would make straps for bras. We paid the rent with the money I earned. One of my brothers was a soldier, the other had just returned and did not have a job.

I had a bad childhood, I could not get an education. Whereas I was a hardworking student, in third grade, after I quit school, a committee from the school came to my home to ask that I return. To ask why you are not sending your daughter to school. They saw my mom's situation, my mother was sick. I couldn't go. In the meantime there was a government law stating that it was mandatory to finish elementary school. Because of this they would permit me to leave work at 3 o'clock and I would go to night school after that. I finished elementary school this way. I got my certificate. Then I continued working.

During the War

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.

At the time we did not have anything to do with the community, that is to say we did not have any relationship with the community officials. There were 2 synagogues where we lived. Apollon and Zulfaris. Here there were 3-4 rabbis. There were religious members such as usher, cantor etc. There was a mikvah, Talmud Torah, a Yeshiva.

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 [5](#), there was Nesim Behar [a very eminent rabbi at the time who educated nearly all the children of his time. In later years he went to live in Israel and died there.] 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.

Payments were done weekly. I was young, I remember, my dowry was in the closet, it was ready. There was a dark-colored and a light-colored suit, a black and a light silk dress and a lot of everyday skirts and blouses in my dowry. The dowry would be hung on ropes in the house a week before the wedding, and displayed with pots and pans on the floor close by. First the mother-in-law and her family, then the neighbors would come and look. Showing this was mandatory then.

There were horses and vehicles in our neighborhood. The trashman would pass in a vehicle. When I was young we would run after the horse carriages, we would get on them. I remember, we were about 2-3 years old then.

We did not have electricity or running water in our house at all. We had a gas lamp in our house. My mother was a tailor, she would sew in the light of the gas lamp hanging on the wall at night. We didn't have running water either. There was a tree across the house, there was a big fountain there. We would go there and bring bucketfuls of water home. I remember when we went to the fountain to get water the Turks also came. We mingled well with them, there was no discord among us. But later someone would come out and say "dirty Jew" in one of our best moments. In reality we got along well but if something went awry, they would say dirty Jew. But some among them would instantly protect us.

There was a hamam in Kasimpasa. We would go to the hamam with our mother. We would go once every 15 days or once a month. We couldn't go more often because our pockets didn't have much money. We would go, bathe, and in the very end, we would throw 41 bowls of tevila. Every time we went, after we bathed, the tub would be cleaned thoroughly, refilled, and we would pray by throwing 41 bowls of water and we would get out. We learned this from the rabbis. This was a tradition, [actually a wrong and superstitious practice that had nothing to do with religious practice] that's how it was then.

In our neighborhood, the military parades, special celebrations or independence days would be celebrated in Sishane caddesi(street). Turkish Independence Day [6](#) would be celebrated, there would be military ceremonies. I remember, there was a fire department in the Sishane plaza, there was an amusement part next to it, and Sari Madam(Yellow Madam) next to that. Sari Madam was a coffee house in Sishane and two thirds of it was Jewish. My mother would bring food on the weekends to Sari Madam and we would eat that with tea or coffee. That was our biggest pastime. People would meet up here, and chat. On Independence Day, columns would be placed in front and there would be official parades. My mother would take me and my older brothers to watch these. I

even remember the death of Ataturk [7](#), I was around 4-5 years old, we went to sishane meydanı(plaza), we all bawled. I remember it as if it was today, there was no one without tears. They brought the coffin from Dolmabahçe. They took it from Dolmabahçe to Sishane and from there to Taksim. I don't know how far we went with my older brothers, we followed them, sometimes on someone's lap, sometimes holding their hands. I remember it as if it happened today.

I had a lot of friends from school. The majority were Jewish. I still have friends that I visit with. Emeli Haleva, Sarika Azuz, Suzi Filiba. We currently meet and visit each other with them. Apart from the school, I had friends from the neighborhood also. I don't remember them much. Our biggest pastime was a rope. We would jump rope then, we would play ball.

In my spare time, I've had a lot of projects, a lot of hobbies. I raised myself, I would cut my old dresses and make blouses. I started these when I was 6 years old. I would put corks on the ends of my mother's hairpins and I would knit. I would knit scarves at the age of 6. In this way I knit a lot of things now. Sewing, knitting became my hobbies. I did not go to school but life educated me. Today I am someone who knows all there is to know, I don't lack for anything. Today I have a lot of friends who are graduates of college, you won't believe me but I am superior. I raised myself. I raised myself by reading.

I liked walking as a form of exercise. I used to walk a lot.

I never went to a club or social association.

Until I got engaged I never did anything on Saturdays. I don't know if it was because of religion but we never went out on Saturdays with friends, it wasn't permitted.

On Sundays, there wasn't much to do, we would go out to the street, we would play ball, jump rope, there wasn't anything else. When I was young there was no such thing as pleasure trips, eating out at restaurants. Our most important event was for adults and children to gather in a house on Saturday evenings. Songs would be sung, games would be played with coffee cups. This was how this game was played; something like a coin would be put inside one of a lot of upside-down cups, whoever found it would win who knows how many pennies. This was called coffee cup game. Lotto was played. We would play as a crowd, with adults and neighbors. These were our pastimes.

After the War

I got in my deceased brother's car for the very first time. He took us touring, it was superb. My first car ride was around 1945. My mother also took us around on train, she would take us to Florya. She would take us to the sea in Kucukcekmece. We would pack food in baskets along with the neighbors, get on the train from Sirkeci and go to the sea.

It was my mother who went to the bazaar in our house. There was a special butcher, greengrocer, printer she shopped from, she always bought from them.

I remember the wealth tax [8](#) from my youth. After my father died, my mother continued with the business, she would sew pants. They would bring her items for her to work on, they would take it after she sewed. If I am not wrong she received a wealth tax of 500 liras because she did this. The smallest wealth tax was 500 liras. My mother quit the business because she could not pay it. "I

cannot afford to pay this, i don't have money" she objected. We had a coalman in our neighborhood, our mukhtar. One day I went to buy coal, I had just started elementary school. There was a woman, an informer, she lived above the mukhtar. "E, Zumbul, what are you doing?" "Nothing", I said, "I am going to school". I was only 7 years old. "What does your older brother do?" "My brother is an ironworker, he works" I said. "Your oldest brother?" "He is a soldier" I said. "Your mother?" "My mother is at home" I said. This woman tells all of this to the mukhtar. And the mukhtar sues us. Why? Because at the time they would pay a salary to the family of the person who was a soldier, either 150 liras or 200 liras. But of course in order to get this money there shouldn't be anyone working in the house. All of a sudden we receive a summons saying you have someone working in the house. The day came when the trial took place, they made me testify. But they were wrong about one thing. My working brother was Avram. Instead of writing Avram, they wrote Zumbul. They took me to the courthouse. We did not have a lawyer or anyone, only the lawyer appointed by the government. They asked my mother, do you work, she said no, I was, but I quit. They asked my sister-in-law she said I don't work, I stay home. They said to me you work. No, sir, I said, I attend the Ikinci Karma [2nd coeducational] Jewish school. "What grade are you in?" "I am in 3rd grade", I said. "O.k., give us the address of the school", they said, and they went to the school, they asked, "yes", they said, "she attends the school" and in this way we won the lawsuit. We had received a fine of I don't know how much. We didn't have a single penny to pay this. We left the place and at first we didn't know if we won the lawsuit. My mother asked the attorney what happened. The attorney said "You are lucky, there was a mix-up with the names, you won in the court". And so we won the lawsuit.

There was a lot of poverty at the time of the wealth tax, we used to buy bread with a ration card It was wartime at the same time. I remember, I slept with my mother, we had something like a small cloth bag under our pillow. In it we kept our birth certificates, important papers, 1-2 pieces of underwear. The lights would go out at midnight. Our curtains were dark blue roller blinds, light should not be seen from the outside. Airplanes would pass over, sirens would be heard immediately. I wasn't going to school then, I was about 4 or 5. We would all leave the house and run to a shelter a little further down from Sishane. We would all wait there, we would all gather one on top of another. Whenever the whistle ended, that is when we returned home.

My spouse Nesim Ers was born in Istanbul in 1928. He finished elementary school. His mother tongue was Ladino. His father's name was Marko Eliyezer Ers and mother's name was Anetta Ers. My husband had 3 siblings. His older sister Suzan Ers (Mizrahi) had 4 children: Sara, Eliyezar, Klara, Smulik Mizrahi. His older brother Izak Ers had 2 children: Eliyezer and Moiz Ers. His younger brother Sami Ers never married, did not have children. All 3 siblings passed away.

When I was around 15, they settled in the flat underneath us as a family. My spouse's mother and father, Anetta and Marko Eliyezer Ers had left for Israel around 1948. When they couldn't manage there, they returned within a year. When they came back they were looking for a house. They knew my mother and my mother told them there is an empty flat underneath us, come and take a look. They came, they looked and decided to rent the house and started living here. We did not see each other with my husband then. He would go to work, I would go to work. My husband had close friends in the neighborhood. He did not socialize with us. We never talked or anything. One day, a friend of his named Albert comes to our house and says to my mother: "we are going to gather in my house on new year's eve, girls and boys, is it possible for your daughter to attend, we are short

one girl?" My mother says "listen, if my sons hear about it, they will be angry" and the kid says "don't worry, we are very close anyways, we will just have fun together, keep it a secret, nothing will happen". My mother finally gives permission. I wasn't even 16 then. I went to that meeting that night. I had a very nice evening, we ate, we danced. The place we went to was in Kurtulus. At night to return home, since we are neighbors, my husband accompanies me and brings me home. I felt the electricity at that meeting. Two months passed. We used to go to the same place for work, to Eminonu. There weren't a lot of vehicles at the time, we would walk. We always walked both directions then. One morning, as I was going to work, there was a newspaperman in Sishane, he would sell newspapers on the floor. My husband is waiting in front of the newspaperman. As I am about to pass him, he stops me and greets me. In reality, we had already met but it was evident that he wanted to become friends with me. But I was in love with another young man, Jano Alkabes, but he was much older than me. I was 16, he was 27. But I was very much in love with him. But they were about to emigrate to Israel as a family, I had to separate. By separate I mean, we didn't socialize much but we had an intimacy. He was the friend of one of my friend's older brother and we would meet every Sunday and dance. Truly, I don't know if it was puppy love but I loved him a lot. When my husband appeared that morning we went to work together chatting all the way. At the time my deceased brother also went to work in Eminonu. Sometimes we went together, sometimes we met on the way, we would return together. Our work places were close anyways. If needed, I would go and come back with him. Next morning, I see my husband is there again. Again we went to work talking all the way. This went on for 1-2 weeks. Gossip spread right away then. I had cousins, they immediately informed my mother. Zumbul is constantly going with someone, who is this, they asked. My mother was a smart woman, she was aware that I was walking with the neighbor but she did not say anything. This lasted almost 3 months, we started returning together from work in the evenings as well as mornings. One evening, after work, we spent too much time walking around and I got home at 9 instead of 7. I said I cannot enter home, who knows how my mother will confront me. He said don't worry, I am here. Just as I entered the house my mother confronts me with a stick. As soon as she said: "May you be cursed, where have you been?", my mother-in-law appeared, "don't worry, she comes and goes with a Jew, what is wrong with my son, does he lack anything?" she said and shut my mother up. Later on my mother said: "they are going to be engaged this week, this subject is closed". And that is how it happened. We married in the Zulfaris synagogue in 1953.

We got ready early in the morning on the wedding day. There was a lot of snow that day, it was the 15th of March. We went to the synagogue, we got married. We came home after the synagogue. There was a hotel in Tepebasi, Park hotel, I think it is still there, we stayed there one night. The next day, my sister-in-law used to live in Tunel, we went to her house and ate together. In the evening we went to our home. At the time we married in poverty. We found our house a month before our wedding. My mother had given 1,000 Turkish liras as dowry then. We furnished our house with that money. The house had 2 rooms. We used one as a sitting and bedroom, the other as the livingroom. We had a large divan and a table in the livingroom. We also had a big radio, it was very valuable at that time. We had a bathroom but no kitchen, I had converted the hallway into a kitchen.

My husband was a textile worker first, then he started commerce. He worked in the business of dry goods for a while, then started working on his own. He was in the same business. He would buy goods, take them to the vendors in the bazaar on his motorcycle. He started earning well. We

moved to a beautiful house, thank G-d, he provided me with a good life. We were much better compared to before.

At first, when we just got married, we were friends with his older brother. His brother had 2 apartments, when I gave birth to my older son, we moved to one, they moved to the other. We had a very close relationship with them and the neighbors. In the meantime my husband bought a car, we had such wonderful days with that car. Our days passed with wonderful, sweet conversations, with songs, with strolls. My sister and brother-in-law were talented in vaudeville. Those laughs were life-affirming. Our husbands worked on Sundays too. We women had a great time, we would prepare tea, cakes, everything for our husbands when they came home. There was no financial discord among us. The in-laws were rich, we were so-so but we got along well. We lived in their apartment. Much later on, there appeared a lack of harmony among siblings. Things like I want to go to this place, I don't want to go to that place. My husband suggested taking a break and not socializing as friends so that the brotherhood would not be affected. After these events we had another circle of friends. We had lovely days and evenings with them also. We always went to the movies, theatre, and concerts.

We spent our summers in Buyukada [the largest one of the Princess Islands]. We had a house there, we went every year. Later on, we had to sell it due to the illness of my husband. We had wonderful days until he became sick. Many years ago he had jaundice when he was young. He had to be on a strict diet after this but he did not pay attention. Whenever he was under the weather he never asked for a doctor and he never went to see one. 8 years before he died, one day, when he was getting dressed to go out, he had blisterlike things on his legs. These blisters opened up and started to ooze. Let's go to the doctor, I said, he told me nothing happens and shut me up. This went on for a while. We decided this couldn't go on, my daughter-in-law Arlet, wife of my son Salvo, devised a plan. She invited us for a visit, and also there was a doctor Mesullam, she invited him too. And he examined my husband in the home of Arlet. This is important he said, he prescribed tests. We did the tests later on, and the diagnosis was liver disease. If it is not taken care of properly, it will turn into cirrhosis, they said. Therapy was mandatory but he did not take care of himself and it became aggravated. Later we took him to Balikli hastanesi (hospital) for a check-up. They did all his tests. And they discovered that it was cirrhosis. He has five years left they said. G-d knows how we suffered for 5 years. He died on September 14th, 1994. My husband was interned in the Ulus Jewish cemetery with a religious ceremony. There was a rabbi at his funeral of course, Kaddish was recited. We have his yartzheit every year on the anniversary of his death.

My older son Salvator Yesua (we call him Salvo for short) was born in Istanbul in 1955 along with his twin. When Salvo was born, he was 1.7 kg., the other one was 2.8 kg. Salvo's twin lived for 4 months. One day I put both in their stroller and took them to Tozkoparan to get some fresh air and to feed them their formula. He died suddenly until we reached home. We called a doctor, he said "teila amen", there was no cause, he was fine. Some said it was because of evil eye. The fat one died, the thin one lived. Because Salvo was very thin, he couldn't be circumcised after either 1 month or 3 months, only 6 months later was it possible. His weight was not sufficient, we had a lot of difficulty. His weight was checked every month. When he was up to his normal kg., then he had his circumcision. We celebrated Salvo's bar-mitzvah in a ballroom that was under Site sinemasi(movie-theater). There were no hotels and such then.

He studied in the 11th elementary school in Sishane. He went to B'nai Brith for junior high. Then he went to night school for English. We sent my older son to Nesim Behar to learn religion. But Nesim Behar put a lot of pressure. He was a child then, religiously children should not be pressured. On Saturdays you will not touch money, you will not walk, you will not turn on the radio, you will not play ball, you will not go out, and so on and so on. In the end the child rebelled, now he has nothing to do with religion.

When Salvo was 18 years old, he met Arlet Munteanu. They came from Romania, rather from Romania to Israel, and from there to Istanbul. My son and Arlet formed a friendship. When my son reached 19, just as he entered 20, he was supposed to be called to military service. But Arlet and her family wished fervently to have a civil marriage just so she could stay here. Consequently she wasn't able to stay in Turkey. They were calling her to military service in Israel, or she should be enrolled in university. She then studied here in university. One day Salvo brings Arlet to me, the families haven't met yet. Listen mom, I am leaving for the military on Monday, I am entrusting Arlet to you, we got engaged between ourselves, but we will make the final decision after I complete the military service, and he left. In the meantime I would call Arlet for my son's sake, we would take her out to eat on Sundays. Later she would return home to study. Two months hadn't gone by, one day her mother calls me: "I am Arlet's mother, if I invite you over for coffee, would you come?" I said thank you very much, let me consult my spouse, I will let you know. We accepted the invitation, met them, had coffee, conversed. In the meantime Arlet's father comes up and says what do you want for dowry. How am I going to talk in my son's place, I said, my son hasn't made his final decision yet, don't pressure me. Let my son return from the military, let them decide, then we will talk about the dowry. They talked already, he said, you promise me, are you giving your son to us. I am giving 600 dollars now, until they get married this money will be saved and we will give all of it, he said. I did not say yes or no. Our father did not talk, he was always the quiet type. I came home, I wrote my son a letter. You entrusted this girl to us, but you cannot entrust, this is their only daughter. They want to bring this to its finality, they pressured me I said, he could not say anything. The very next week, father and daughter and my husband went to Amasya to see my son. Later on, my son came on leave before his service was finished, and immediately we had the civil ceremony because Arlet was completing 18 years of age. They got married so she didn't have to go to Israel for military service. The wedding happened after the military service. They got married in Neve Salom [9](#). He had two daughters, named Elza and Raiza. Elza went to Bilge ilkokulu (elementary school) in Maslak, and Lala Hatun ilkokulu in Nisantasi. Later she enrolled in Robert Lisesi (highschool) [10](#) having won first place in Turkey in the entrance exam. Then she went to university in France. She studied art, she's done, now she is still there, both to improve her French and to have a career. Raiza is studying in Koc lisesi (highschool), she will finish and go to the United States.

My son separated from his wife Arlet in April of 2000. One Passover night, when he was over here, he said he doesn't want to go home anymore. I said o.k. Anyways they weren't getting along for a while, he constantly came to me. He would go to play ball, then he would stop by, o.k. one night is fine, 2. night is fine also, 3rd. night again, then I said, come talk to me openly, what is happening. You weren't someone who came here every night. Mom, we decided with Arlet to separate, don't get upset, he said. I said o.k. And a month later he left home. He wanted to stay in a hotel, I did not let him, I said you will come and stay here. He stayed for 1-1,5 years. He met Zeynep, became friends, said I will marry Zeynep. Zeynep wasn't Jewish, she was Muslim. At first I refused, but later

on after I met her, I liked her and I said my son's happiness is more important and I accepted. And he got married a second time.

Izzet was born in Istanbul in 1961. Izzet had a normal circumcision. There was Istanbul Hastanesi (hospital), I gave birth there. We had his circumcision 8 days later. We had a nice b'rit mila with neighbors, friends and our Turkish friends.

Izzet studied in Kurtulus Kuvayi Milliye ilkokulu (elementary school) the first year, then finished in sisli 19 Mayis ilkokulu. He went to junior high there too.

Izzet did not want a bar-mitzvah outside. Spend the money you would have spent on me, he said, and we got him a new bedroom set and had a reception at home for about 30-40 people. Of course he wore tefilin in the synagogue. It was summer then, the month of June. The tefilin ceremony was in the synagogue in Buyukada. Then we waited for the end of the summer season. On our return to Istanbul we had the reception at home.

Izzet went to the military when he reached 20. When he came back from the military he met Perla Benveniste, they dated for a while. Then the families met, talked, the decision was made and we had the engagement. They were engaged for about 2 years, then got married. At first they rented a house in Bomonti and lived there, then they moved to Sisli. They had one child, Igal Ers, his circumcision was in Divan. When they become one month old, kucaras de plata (silver spoons) are given, we had the pidyon. That day the rabbi came, he was given the silver, and he asked "A baby arrived. I will take the baby, I will give you the silver, what do you say, do you want the silver or the child?". We said "we want our son". At this point the rabbi said: "look, the silver is more valuable, I suggest that you take the silver". We said "we want our baby" and we took the baby, left the silver with the rabbi. Naturally we followed our traditions. Of course later the silver is returned but this is what is done for tradition. 3 years ago the bar-mitzvah was done in Neve Salom synagogue. It was a snowy day. First a very nice ceremony was done in the synagogue, then the celebration happened downstairs and food was served. It was quite crowded and it went well. Now he studies in Koc lisesi, he is a very successful student.

We always talked in Turkish with our children, tried to raise them according to Jewish traditions, celebrated the Jewish holidays all together. In the first years of my marriage, all of the mothers and fathers and siblings, we would have a wonderful evening all together. We would gather at my home or my sister-in-law's home. We would gather in my home the first night, at my sister-in-law's the second night.

My children only went to the synagogue on holidays. But my younger son Izzet now goes continually. He started going continually after his father's death. The older one never goes anymore.

I cook sephardic foods, I cook Turkish foods also. Currently I am cooking more Turkish foods, the children prefer this. But I cook sephardic foods too because there are low calorie meals among them, there are vegetables, poached foods, I prefer that. But when they come to visit, I cook mostly Turkish food. My favorite foods involve vegetables. Turlu (mixed baked summer vegetables), apyiko (cooked celery roots), these are good for old people like us. And my favorite traditional sephardic foods are roasted lamb and peas, I also like koftikas de pirasa (leek meatballs), koftikas de patata (potato meatballs).

This is how you make koftikas de pirasa: You boil 1 kg. leeks, squeeze the water out of them. You boil 1-2 potatoes, puree them, add salt and pepper. You add 200gr ground beef and mix up the leeks, potatoes with one egg and make meatballs out of that. First you dip them in eggs, then flour and fry them in hot oil.

The subjects of Judaism and Israel would be discussed with friends from the vast community. For example we were quite upset and saddened by the war in 1967 [11](#). Same thing with the Yom Kippur war [12](#). We would constantly follow the news from the agencies, how is Israel, what is happening there. Even today whenever we hear bad news about Israel, our sorrow is infinite.

I did not notice an increase in antisemitism in Turkey during the time when the Holocaust was taking place in Europe. Sometimes there might have been minor events. We were close with the Turks. Our life was very nice with them. They had even taken my mother under their protection, all the neighbors. We lived a long time with Turks. But at the smallest provocation, for example when we went to the fountain, they would put me to the end of the line. There have been times when they said dirty Jew. The same people would get along well and at the same time behave like this. But these were minor things. We did not experience a big evil or such.

I also remember the events of September 6-7, 1956. [13](#) I had twins at the time of Salvo's birth. As soon as I delivered, I came home. We were close with the Turks, we had a good relationship. There was a coffeehouse in Sishane, in our neighborhood, it belonged to the Greeks. I was aware that something was being mentioned in our house. My mother, my brothers, my father-in-law were all talking about something. I was asking what happened, they wouldn't tell me anything. In the evening, I was in bed, I was recovering from childbirth, all of a sudden, there was a loud noise, a demolishing noise. They destroyed the coffeehouse of Yorgo. I felt afraid, took the children next to me. What did our Turkish neighbors do, they got small flags, came in front of our door and protected me. At the time I was living in a small house like a villa. They came all the way to the door, asked are there Greeks here, are there Jews. No, this is a Turk's house they said and protected us. My mother turned off the lights from fright. We waited in the dark. I started shaking from fear, my husband left around 9 or 10 to save his store. When he came back he said that nothing happened to his store. But they destroyed my older brother's glassware store, they broke everything and threw it to the streets. The store was in disarray. They messed up everything. All the curtains, fabrics, refrigerators, machines were all over the streets. That is what people were telling, I was recovering from childbirth.

My brother restored his store later on. Not even a week passed when they took my husband to the military service for a second time for one month. There was the draft then because of the Cyprus problem. He went to Hadimkoy. My brother took me and my children to his home. I lived with them for a month until my husband returned. I don't remember the name of this, it was a preparation of drafting us in case of war.

There was the politics of "Citizen, speak in Turkish" [14](#) at one point. We always talked in Turkish. My Turkish was very good, you could not differentiate. We talked constantly in Turkish until getting married, until my children grew up. Much later, when my father and mother-in-law came to visit we started talking in the Jewish idiom to converse with them. We would even warn people talking in Ladino, talk in Turkish so there won't be a problem. Of course the older women could not speak Turkish well, they spoke it flawed.

We were very happy with the birth of the Israeli nation. I wanted very much to do an aliyah there, to live in Israel, I thought a lot about it, but my husband did not want it, we could not agree as a family. When my husband was sick and we went there and saw the place my husband said I wish I had listened to you. He liked it a lot there.

My second older brother lives there. He has daughters, they have a very good life, one of them works in the municipality, the other takes care of children in a college. They all have homes, cars, they have everything. My brother has a home, superb, his life is wonderful. My sister-in-law, my husband's older sister lives there. Her daughters live there. I went to Israel 6 times, I always stay at the home of my sister-in-law's daughters. They are like my own daughters.

I do not have much involvement with the Jewish community nowadays, I am not a member of any organisation or club. I used to go help Misne Tora a lot before. The inside there used to be all stone, marble. It was so cold, that it made me ill and I pulled back. Now they improved that place and it became very comfortable.

Again, before, I used to attend Haleva's seminars about Judaism in Yildirimspor. Today I do everything that is religiously necessary. I celebrate the holidays, I observe kashrut. I don't go to the synagogue very often any more. I only go on the holidays. I am able to go for weddings.

I did not have any problems with my children as far as raising my grandchildren according to Jewish traditions. I still gather the family and cook food.

I have a lot of friends. But I have a problem, they smoke a lot. Because I suffer from cardiac problems smoking bothers me quite a bit. I used to socialize a lot but I had to pull back. But I still see them but not as often as before. I couldn't live without friends.

We were in Buyukada in 1986 when the massacre in Neve Shalom [15](#) happened, we heard about it, we were devastated, we didn't know what to do. There was nothing to do anyways but we were very upset. It was either the eve of Yom Kippur or Rosh hashana. We had a miserable holiday.

I lived through very difficult times in the bombing events of November 2003 [16](#). That Saturday morning I was in the kitchen and I was washing dishes when I suddenly heard a sound like boom, I thought someone had a flat tire. A few minutes passed, a friend of mine called. It was 10.30 a.m. "Did Izzet go to the synagogue?" I was immediately worried, "why are you asking me this, he goes to the synagogue every Saturday", I said. "What happened, did something happen, please tell me, don't hide it from me", I said. "See, a bomb exploded". I heard about the bomb, I started hitting myself in the head. I called Salvo rightaway. Zeynep answered, the second wife of Salvo, she told me she heard it on the television, "don't be afraid" she said. But I could not stay still, because my son Izzet was inside. Zeynep woke Salvo up immediately, I got dressed, and rushed out to the street, one shoe on one foot, the other bare, Salvo met me to ask where are you going. I yelled that I was going to Sisli. I was so agitated I didn't know what to do. My son calmed me down. "If you behave like this it will be worse, let's wait a little and find out what happened and what didn't". We immediately turned on the television. I do not know what I did, what I lived through, what kind of crisis I was in during those moments. In the meantime we called Izzet's store, Izzet would go to his store to work after the synagogue. His neighbor answered, I excitedly asked about Izzet. "Don't worry, Izzet just came but took a wounded person to the hospital". I told him to have him call me

when he returns, I want to hear his voice, only then will I breathe easy. At any rate when Izzet came to the store he called me rightaway. "Mom. Don't worry about me, I am fine" he said but I was still trembling all over. Later on he came here. Following him, friends, relatives all came to say: sorry, hope you will recover soon. That was a miserable day.

GLOSSARY

1 Ladino

also known as Judeo-Spanish, it is the spoken and written Hispanic language of Jews of Spanish and Portuguese origin. Ladino did not become a specifically Jewish language until after the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492 (and Portugal in 1495) - it was merely the language of their province. It is also known as Judezmo, Dzhudezmo, or Spaniolit. When the Jews were expelled from Spain and Portugal they were cut off from the further development of the language, but they continued to speak it in the communities and countries to which they emigrated. Ladino therefore reflects the grammar and vocabulary of 15th century Spanish. In Amsterdam, England and Italy, those Jews who continued to speak 'Ladino' were in constant contact with Spain and therefore they basically continued to speak the Castilian Spanish of the time. Ladino was nowhere near as diverse as the various forms of Yiddish, but there were still two different dialects, which corresponded to the different origins of the speakers: 'Oriental' Ladino was spoken in Turkey and Rhodes and reflected Castilian Spanish, whereas 'Western' Ladino was spoken in Greece, Macedonia, Bosnia, Serbia and Romania, and preserved the characteristics of northern Spanish and Portuguese. The vocabulary of Ladino includes hundreds of archaic Spanish words, and also includes many words from different languages: mainly from Hebrew, Arabic, Turkish, Greek, French, and to a lesser extent from Italian. In the Ladino spoken in Israel, several words have been borrowed from Yiddish. For most of its lifetime, Ladino was written in the Hebrew alphabet, in Rashi script, or in Solitro. It was only in the late 19th century that Ladino was ever written using the Latin alphabet. At various times Ladino has been spoken in North Africa, Egypt, Greece, Turkey, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Romania, France, Israel, and, to a lesser extent, in the United States and Latin America.

[2] Alliance Israelite Universelle: founded in 1860 in Paris, this was the main organization that provided Ottoman and Balkan Jewry with western style modern education. The alliance schools were organized in a network with their Central Committee in Paris. The teaching body was usually the alumni trained in France. The schools emphasized modern sciences and history in their curriculum; nevertheless Hebrew and religion were also taught. Generally students were left ignorant of the Turkish language and the history and culture of the Ottoman Empire and as a result the new generation of Ottoman Jews was more familiar with France and the west in general than with their surrounding society. In the Balkans the first school was opened in Greece (Volos) in 1865, then in the Ottoman Empire in Adrianople in 1867, Shumla (Shumen) in 1870, and in Istanbul, Smyrna (Izmir), and Salonika in the 1870s. In Bulgaria numerous schools were also established; after 1891 those that had adopted the teaching of the Bulgarian language were recognized by the state. The modernist Jewish elite and intelligentsia of the late nineteenth century Ottoman Empire was known for having graduated from alliance schools; they were closely attached to the Young Turk circles, and after 1908 three of them (Carasso, Farraggi, and Masliah) were members of the new Ottoman Chamber of Deputies.

3 Menderes, Adnan (1899-1961)

Turkish prime minister and martyr. He became one of the leaders of the new Democratic Party, the only opposition party in Turkey in 1945, and prime minister after the elections in 1950. He was re-elected in 1954 and 1957 and deposed in 1960 by a military coup, lead by General Cemal Gursel. He was put on trial on the charge of violating the constitution and was executed. (Source: <http://www.encyclopedia.com/>)

4 Events of 6th-7th September 1955

Pogrom against the ethnic Greeks in Istanbul. It broke out after the rumour that Ataturk's house in Salonika (Greece) was being bombarded. As most of the Greek houses and businesses had been registered by the authorities earlier it was easy to carry out the pogrom. The Greek (and other non-Muslim communities) were hit severely: 3 people were killed, 30 were wounded, also 1004 houses, 4348 shops, 27 pharmacies and laboratories, 21 factories, 110 restaurants and cafes, 73 churches, 26 schools, 5 sports clubs and 2 cemeteries were destroyed; 200 Greek women were raped. A great wave of immigration occurred after these events and Istanbul was cleansed of its Greek population.

5 Mahaziketora

Talmud Torah, Sunday school where Judaic religious education was given to Jewish children.

6 Turkish Independence Day: National Holiday in Turkey commemorating the foundation of the Turkish Republic on 29th October 1923. The annual celebrations include military parades, student parades, concerts, exhibitions and balls.

7 Ataturk, Mustafa Kemal (1881-1938)

Great Turkish statesman, the founder of modern Turkey. Mustafa Kemal was born in Salonika; he adapted the name Ataturk (father of the Turks) when he introduced surnames in Turkey. He joined the liberal Young Turk movement, aiming at turning the Ottoman Empire into a modern Turkish nation state and also participated in the Young Turk Revolt (1908). He fought in the Second Balkan War (1913) and World War I. After the Ottoman capitulation to the Entente, Mustafa Kemal Pasha organized the Turkish Nationalist Party (1919) and set up a new government in Ankara to rival Sultan Mohammed VI, who had been forced to sign the treaty of Sevres (1920), according to which Turkey would loose the Arab and Kurdish provinces, Armenia, and the whole of European Turkey with Istanbul and the Aegean littoral to Greece. He was able to regain much of the lost provinces and expelled the Greeks from Anatolia. He abolished the Sultanate and attained international recognition for the Turkish Republic at the Lausanne Treaty (1923). Under his presidency Turkey became a constitutional state (1924), universal male suffrage was introduced, state and church were divided and he also introduced the Latin script.

8 Wealth Tax

Introduced in December 1942 by the Grand National Assembly in a desperate effort to resolve depressed economic conditions caused by wartime mobilization measures against a possible German influx to Turkey via the occupied Greece. It was administered in such a way to bear most heavily on urban merchants, many of who were Christians and Jews. Those who lacked the financial liquidity had to sell everything or declare bankruptcy and even work on government projects in order to pay their debts, in the process losing most or all of their properties. Those unable to pay were subjected to deportation to labor camps until their obligations were paid off.

9 Neve Shalom Synagogue

Situated near the Galata Tower, it is the largest synagogue of Istanbul. Although the present building was erected only in 1952, a synagogue bearing the same name had been standing there as early as the 15th century.

10 Robert College: The oldest and most prestigious English language school in Istanbul since the mid-19th century providing education to the elite of Turkey as well as other countries in the region. Robert College was born in 1863 in the village of Bebek by the Bosphorus, when Christopher Robert approached Cyrus Hamlin with his desires and found a receptive audience. Hamlin, an American schoolmaster, had been running a school, a bakery and a laundry in Bebek at the time. Robert was a wealthy American industrialist desiring to establish in Turkey a modern university along American lines with instruction in English. These two men, an educator and a philanthropist, successfully collaborated to found Robert College. Until 1971, it included two campuses: the actual Robert College exclusively for boys and the American College for Girls. In 1971, the American College for Girls and the Robert College boys school united and co-education started under the name of Robert College at the previous American College for Girls campus. At the same time the Turkish government took over the boys' campus, which became Bogazici University (Bosporus University). Robert College and today's Bogazici University were and still are the best schools in Turkey. Through the years, these schools have had graduates occupying top positions in Turkey's business, political, academic and art sectors.

11 Six-Day War

The first strikes of the Six-Day-War happened on 5th June 1967 by the Israeli Air Force. The entire war only lasted 132 hours and 30 minutes. The fighting on the Egyptian side only lasted four days, while fighting on the Jordanian side lasted three. Despite the short length of the war, this was one of the most dramatic and devastating wars ever fought between Israel and all of the Arab nations. This war resulted in a depression that lasted for many years after it ended. The Six-Day-War increased tension between the Arab nations and the Western World because of the change in mentalities and political orientations of the Arab nations.

12 Yom Kippur War

The Arab-Israeli War of 1973, also known as the Yom Kippur War or the Ramadan War, was a war between Israel on one side and Egypt and Syria on the other side. It was the fourth major military confrontation between Israel and the Arab states. The war lasted for three weeks: it started on 6th October 1973 and ended on 22nd October on the Syrian front and on 26th October on the Egyptian

front.

13 Events of 6th-7th September 1955

Pogrom against the ethnic Greeks in Istanbul. It broke out after the rumour that Ataturk's house in Salonika (Greece) was being bombarded. As most of the Greek houses and businesses had been registered by the authorities earlier it was easy to carry out the pogrom. The Greek (and other non-Muslim communities) were hit severely: 3 people were killed, 30 were wounded, also 1004 houses, 4348 shops, 27 pharmacies and laboratories, 21 factories, 110 restaurants and cafes, 73 churches, 26 schools, 5 sports clubs and 2 cemeteries were destroyed; 200 Greek women were raped. A great wave of immigration occurred after these events and Istanbul was cleansed of its Greek population.

14 Citizen, speak Turkish policy

In the 1930s-1940s, the rise of Turkish nationalism affected the Jewish community as well. The Salonican Jew Moise Cohen (1883-1961), who had been in close contact with the young Turks in his home town in the years preceding the restoration of the Constitution, took the old Turkish name Tekinalp. He led a campaign among his fellow Jews to encourage them to speak only Turkish to integrate them fully into Turkish life, declaring that 'Turkey is your home, so you should speak Turkish.' In the major culture however, the policy of 'Citizen, speak Turkish' was seen as pressure put on minorities to speak Turkish in public places. There was a lot of criticism and verbal attacks and jeers on those who did not comply with this social rule.

15 1986 Terrorist Attack on the Neve-Shalom Synagogue

In September 1986, Islamist terrorists carried out a terrorist attack with guns and grenades on worshippers in the Neve-Shalom synagogue, killing 23. The Turkish government and people were outraged by the attack. The damage was repaired, except for several bullet holes in a seat-back, left as a reminder.

16 2003 Bombing of the Istanbul Synagogues

On 15th November 2003 two suicide terrorist attacks occurred nearly simultaneously at the Sisli and Neve-Shalom synagogues. The terrorists drove vans loaded with explosives and detonated the bombs in front of the synagogues. It was Saturday morning and the synagogues were full for the services. Due to the strong security measures that had been taken, there were no casualties inside, however, 26 pedestrians on the street were killed; five of them were Jewish. The material loss was also terrible. The terrorists belonged to the Turkish branch of Al Qaida.