

## Jewish Heritage

**Jewish Heritage**The first Jews are estimated to have settled in Anatolia in the 6th century B.C., making the Jewish community in Turkey one of the oldest in the world. Biblical references in Isaiah (66;19 and Joel (3;4-6) testify to Jewish Presence in Anatolia, pointing to a place called Sepharad in Obadiah (1;20).In the 3th century B.C., Antiochus brought 2.000 Jews to Phrygia and Lydia, thriving civilizations in western Anatolia, and the first Synagogues in Asia minor were built during this time. Cicero informs us that the monies that Jews from Bergama had gathered for Bet Hamikdash (Holly Temple) in Jerusalem were confiscated, confirming in this context the Jewish presence at the time. St. Paul was born in Tarsus and lived as an influential and well -to- do Jew until he became an apostle of Jesus Christ. Later, during his many journeys to preach the gospel, he targeted locations in Anatolia with large Jewish communities. In the first few centuries A.D. there were rich Jewish units in Hierapolis (Pamukkale) and Cappadocia (Kapadokya) in central Anatolia. During the time of Byzantine Empire, most Jewish communities were settled in western Anatolia and in Istanbul, than Istanbul called Constantinople. Jews's rights were significantly restricted by laws enacted by Byzantine rulers Constantine, Theodosius and Justinian, and they suffered the most severe blow during the Crusades when Constantinople was temporarily occupied by the Latin Kingdom and the Jewish districts were set on fire. Thus, when Mehmet II. Conquered Constantinople in 1453.the Romaniot (Byzantine) Jewish community hailed him as a liberator.Over the next two centuries, the country became a heaven for Jews fleeing repression and expulsion from various parts of Europe, including Hungary, France, Spain, Sicily, Salonika and Bavaria. Ottomans greatly encouraged Jewish immigration, which became a torrent When Spanish and Portuguese Jews were expelled from their homes by the Spanish Inquisition and fled to Turkey. These Jews used their international connections and linguistic skills to develop the Ottoman Empire's foreign trade. In the liberal atmosphere of Ottoman rule, Jewish activity flourished and many Jews held important positions. Istanbul was the home of great rabbis and scholars and one of the main centers for printing of Hebrew books. The community began to ebb in the 17's century, reflecting the decay of the country's international position. In the 19th century conditions for Jews to emigrate. The majority settled in the Americas. At the turn of twentieth century, about 100.000 Jews lived in Turkey. 46.000 in Istanbul, over 16.000 in Izmir, 5.700 in Edirne, 23.700 in Canakkale, Bursa and Cappadocia.Modern Turkey emerged as a secular, democratic republic out of country's debacle in World War I. 1992 Jewish community celebrated the 500th anniversary of arrival of first Sephardim. Today, approximately 25.000 Jews live in Turkey as a Turkish citizen. The Jewish community is officially recognized by state through its Chief Rabbinate.

**HARRAN** :Harran was the abode of prophet Abraham for an extended period of time (Genesis 11;26.25:10). Abraham is presumed to have received God's word at about 75 years of age when he was living in Harran. Abraham and his family began their journey to Canaan (Genesis 12:4). Thus it could be argued that the ancestors of Jews have been in this area since the beginning of at least biblical time. If the Garden of Eden ever existed, it is generally thought to have been situated in the area of Tigris and Euphrates Rivers whose headwaters rise in Eastern Turkey. Houses in Harran are built of blocks of stone in Igloo style to avoid direct sun exposure. each dome covers a separate room, and room mostly have no windows for purpose of keeping the heat out. The architecture in Harran has remained the same since the time of Abraham.

**SARDIS** : Sardis was the capital of the Kingdom of Lydia, ruled between 560 and 546 B.C. by the wealthy King Croesus, the first monarch to mint coins. During the time of the Roman Empire, it became a city of 100.000 with a large and prosperous Jewish population. The synagogue of Sardis built on the Sardis Ur Way, most probably after being converted from basilica like building the Romans gave the Jews as a gift. There is magnificent gymnasium connected to the synagogue which supports this theory. The synagogue measures 120 meters in length and 18 meters in width, and dates back to 3rd century A.D. The original floor mosaics can still be seen intact today, whereas the marble panes on the walls have been rebuilt mimicking original materials and craftsmanship. An incised plaque, depicting a seven branched menorah, a lulav (palm branch), and shofar (ram's horn) was found at the base of the shrines. Two pairs of marble lions (replicas) stand guard. Semicircular benches in the apse behind the table probably were reserved for the "elders". Fragments of a stone menorah, or seven branched lamb stand.

**THE HIERAPOLIS NECROPOLIS** : The largest roman cemetery in Anatolia, is spread over one square kilometer. on the various different styles of tombs, menorahs can be observed next to crosses and scripts in Greek and Latin. Hierapolis and Laodicea, which were home to large Jewish settlements during to Roman Empire, became important centers of early Christian expansion. This area was a thriving commercial community specializing in textile, and the Jews took an active part in this trade. When the cities were abandoned in 7th century A.D., the Jewish population also left the area.

**IZMIR (SMYRNA)** :In Izmir itself ,a short flight from Istanbul, several traces remain of community that when the town began is seventieth century development as a center for Mediterranean commerce, had been one of the most important Jewish settlements in Ottoman Empire. Of the 16.000 who lived in pleasant seaside city before 1948,only about 2.000 remain. Though they now reside primarily in the prestigious Alsancak area, where they have built a new synagogue ,SHAR HASHAMAYIM, the primary sights are concentrated in around the Bazaar. Apposite Emlak Bank, Shabbetai Tzvi was born. In the Bazaar is a street now known Havra Street, for the nine synagogues and many Jewish shops that once dotted the way. Now only two Synagogues are easily to seen. One of is the SENORA SYNAGOGUE at number 77. At airy sanctuary, whose dominant color is white, though trimmed with muted turquoise and gold, it boasts a piece of Ottoman arts -a work featuring flowers in a vase on its left wall- as well as framed prayer around the walls in the tradition of Ottoman mosques. Its four central pillars are topped by arches; its torah covers are silk velvet, embroidered with real gold thread; and its eternal light always burns pure olive oil. THE SHALOM SYNAGOGUE, almost everything, from the walls to the benches, is bright turquoise. Cushions covered with bright floral pattern pad the benches edging the walls

and running perpendicular to the ark. The floor is covered with Turkish carpets, some of which display minaret motifs. But most striking is the sailing painted, as the ceilings of wealthy Ottoman homes were, with geometric kilims designs and colors meant to look like carpets. BETH ISRAEL SYNAGOGUE, and "ASANSOR" or elevator, the first in Izmir, constructed in 1907 by Nissim Levy. Levy made his fortune by charging for the ride from one street to another one on a higher level, one hundred feet up a cliff side. Ephesus is considered by many to be antiquity's best preserved city. Only one tenth has been excavated so far, and the heavy money says that when it is, synagogue will be unearthed. That there were Jews here is almost unquestionable since the St. Paul preached in Ephesus and his first targets were the Jewish congregations. Concrete evidence exists in a form not yet officially explained. On the main street of Ephesus stand the remains of library of second century C.E governor general of a large portion of Asia Minor. At the library's entry stand eight columns. And on top step, seventh up from the absolute bottom of the flight, near the base of the third column from left facing inside is clearly defined scratching in the stone of a menorah.

HarranSardisHierapolis - NecropolisSmyrna