



**DAHAN CENTER**  
Jewish Communities  
In The East and West



## **Conference Marking 100 Years since the Founding of the Turkish Republic 1923-2023**

### **Trends in Research into the History and Culture of the Jewish Community in Modern Turkey**

**31 October, 2023**

#### **Call for the Submission of Conference Abstracts**

Turkish Jewry is the largest of the Jewish communities still functioning in Islamic countries in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In the past, Turkish Jewry was known to be a large, vibrant community, one that had immense influence both on the Jewish world and on the broader society of the Middle East and the Balkans.

The beginnings of the community apparently date back to the Second Temple period, but its most significant period of growth, in terms of both size and power, took place following the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492. The exiles were warmly welcomed by the Ottoman Sultan Bayezid II, who gave new hope to the persecuted Spanish Jews, by allowing them to settle within the borders of the Empire. Over the years, Jews in the Ottoman Empire played an important role in commerce, medicine, and diplomacy, as well as making an outstanding contribution to cultural and spiritual life, both religious and secular, with Ladino becoming the community's predominant language. For hundreds of years, the Ottoman Empire ruled over extensive portions of Europe, Asia and Africa, and Jewish communities existed in many regions under its control, including the Middle East, the Balkans, North Africa, and the Arabian Peninsula. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, however, the Ottoman Empire's power began to wane, until its defeat in the First World War, and this was paralleled by the Jewish community declining in size and losing much of its power.

The Jews, like the rest of the minorities, were an integral part of the transformation of the old Ottoman Empire into a secular nation state following 1923. Throughout the history of the Republic, and particularly during specific historical events or episodes – for example, the Aliza Niego incident, the Thrace pogroms, the World War II Wealth Tax, the September 1955 riots, the terrorist attack at the Neve Shalom Synagogue in 1986, and Israel's military operations against the Palestinians – questions regarding the identification and self-representation of the Jews of Turkey deepened. The overlapping borders of "Jewishness" and "Turkishness" created a variety of political identities, which meant that the Jews in the Republic adopted different, sometimes contradictory, approaches to exploring their own communal history. It goes without saying that part of the question of self-representation

corresponds with the relationship of the community and the State of Israel, and the connection between Turkish Jewry and Zionism.

This conference will generally focus on the question of the borders between Jewish behaviors and attitudes in Turkey and Turkish perspectives on the subject of Turkish Jewry in particular and/or Judaism in general, over the course of the history of the Republic. In addition, the conference will seek to examine various research approaches to Turkish Jews and will consider, among other things, issues of self-representation and the discursive Jewish frameworks in the fields of religion, society, politics, economics, law and culture.

The conference will be held at Bar-Ilan University over a single day, on 16 Heshvan 5784, October 31, 2023, with the possibility of parallel sessions.

The conference theme includes, but is not limited to the following topics:

- The legal and economic status of the Jews in Turkey
- The Jews and their relationship with the Moslems and/or the other minorities in Turkey
- Jewish newspapers in Turkey, then and now
- The Rabbinic establishment, its importance and influence
- Israel-Turkey relations, and their influence on the Jews of Turkey
- Ladino as the language of the community
- Jewish-Turkish singers, actors and artists
- Antisemitic events such as the Aliza Niego incident, the imposition of the Wealth Tax during the Second World War, the events of September 1955, and so on
- The Struma disaster and the reconsideration of this episode over the past decade
- The Jews of Turkey and their attitude toward Zionism
- Jewish involvement in political movements in Turkey
- The rabbis of Turkey as a bridge between Turkey and Israel/the Islamic world
- Assimilation processes among the Jews of Turkey
- Jewish Migrations; or Migration of the Jews
- Jewish Culture; or Culture of the Jews; or Culture of the Jewish Community
- Jewish History and Memory: From the establishment of the Republic to the Present

Abstracts should be submitted by February 28, 2023.

Responses will be sent by May 10, 2023.

Abstracts should be sent to the Dahan Center by email: [dahan.center@biu.ac.il](mailto:dahan.center@biu.ac.il)

Sincerely,

Conference Academic Committee

- Dr. Efrat Aviv, Bar-Ilan University, Israel, Chair
- Prof. David Passig, Bar-Ilan University, Israel
- Prof. Berna Pekesen, University of Duisberg-Essen, Germany
- Prof. Tuğçe Ersoy Ceylan, Democracy University of Izmir, Türkiye
- Prof. Süleyman Şanlı, Mardin Artuklu University, Türkiye
- Dr. Shimon Ohayon, Director, Dahan Center, Bar-Ilan University, Israel

