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# The Portugal Synagogue: In Light of Its History and Architecture

## Tarihi ve Mimari Özellikleriyle Portugal Sinagogu

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**Abstract**

The Portugal Synagogue is one of the oldest synagogues in Izmir, built by the Portuguese Jews possibly in the 1630s, in the Ottoman Period. It is located within the Bazaar neighbourhood, one of the first places in Izmir where the Jewish community settled after the province was conquered by the Ottoman Empire. Being very close to the coast and the inner harbour, this area was very attractive for the Portuguese Jews as the majority of the community was engaged in trade. In addition, it seems that the Jewish Quarter of Izmir had evolved around the Portugal Synagogue in the Ottoman period. Probably due to the strong commercial activity in the area, the synagogue was located in the very centre of the city's Jewish neighbourhood. The Portugal Synagogue witnessed disastrous fires (major ones in 1772 and 1841) and earthquakes (major ones in 1688 and 1778), and many historical events including Sabbatai Tsevi's occupation of the synagogue. In the Turkish Republic Period, the synagogue was severely damaged by a fire in 1976 destroying the whole ceiling and all the woodwork. The building, which had mostly lost its authentic features in the fire and due to the interventions that followed, was restored in 2017-18 reviving the structure in its original form. The restoration works were carried out following a ground survey, in accordance with the layers under the existing plaster and by using evidence and information obtained from old photographs and from people who had seen the structure when it was still in use as a synagogue, including those who had once worked there. In this article, the historical and architectural features of Izmir Portugal Synagogue have been introduced in detail and have been given information about restoration works.

**Keywords**
Synagogue, Izmir Jewish Quarters, The Portuguese Community, The Portugal Synagogue, Restoration of the Portugal Synagogue

**Öz**

Osmanlı Dönemi İzmir'inin en eski sinagoglarından biri olan Portugal Sinagogu, Portekiz kökenli Yahudiler tarafından tahminen 1630'lu yıllarda inşa edildi. İnşa edildiği yer, İzmir, Osmanlılar tarafından fethedildikten sonra Yahudilerinin ilk yerleştiği bölgelerden biri olan Pazar yeriydi. Aynı zamanda, sahile ve İç Liman'a oldukça yakın bir konuma sahip olan bu bölge, büyük bir çoğunluğu ticaretle uğraşan Portekiz kökenli Yahudiler için oldukça cazipti. Öte yandan, Osmanlı Dönemi İzmir Yahudi Mahallesi, âdeta Portugal Sinagogu çevresinde şekillenmişti. Muhtemelen bölgenin güçlü ticari aktivitesinden dolayı, sinagog, kentteki Yahudi yerleşim alanının tam merkezinde yer alıyordu. Portugal Sinagogu, büyük yangın (başlıca 1772 ve 1841) ve deprem (başlıca 1688 ve 1789) felaketlerine, Sabetay Tsevi'nin sinagogu işgali dâhil pek çok tarihi olaya şahit oldu. 1976 yılında geçirdiği yangında büyük hasar gördü, tavanı ve tüm ahşap doğramaları yok oldu. Yangın ve sonrasındaki kötü müdahalelerle özgünlüğünü büyük ölçüde yitiren yapı, 2017-2018 yıllarında gerçekleştirilen restorasyon

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çalışmaları ile aslına uygun bir şekilde ayağa kaldırıldı. Restorasyon çalışmaları, yapıyı sinagog olarak kullanıldığı yıllarda gören, hatta görev yapan kişilerin verdiği bilgiler, eski fotoğraflar, sıva raspaları ve zemin araştırmaları ile elde edilen bulgulardan hareketle hazırlanan projeler doğrultusunda gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bu makalede, İzmir Portugal Sinagogu'nun tarihi ve mimari özellikleri ayrıntılı olarak tanıtılmış ve restorasyon çalışmaları hakkında bilgi verilmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler**
Sinagog, İzmir Yahudi Mahalleleri, Portekiz Topluluğu, Portugal Sinagogu, Portugal Sinagogu restorasyonu

## ***Genişletilmiş Özet***

Sinagog kelimesinin etimolojik kökeni Grekçe **συναγωγή/sunagogi**dir. Sinagog, yaklaşık olarak İ.Ö. 7. yüzyıldan itibaren İsrail topraklarında ve ardından sürgün yıllarında diasporada inşa edilen Yahudiliğe özgü çok fonksiyonlu kurumsal dini yapıları ifade eder. Bu yüzden sinagog, sadece **בית התפילה** (beit hatefila/dua evi) değildir. Dua evi fonksiyonuna ilave olarak, hem **בית הכנסת** (beit haknesset/toplantı evidir) hem de **בית המדרש** (beit hamidraş/eğitim evidir). Ayrıca **בית דין** (beit din/yargıçlar kurulu/mahkeme) tarafından toplantı mekânı olarak da kullanılmaktadır. Söz ettiğimiz son üç fonksiyon, çoğunlukla yapı kompleksine dâhil olan müştemilatta (ek bölümlerde) icra edilmektedir. Öte yandan Osmanlı sınırları içerisindeki bazı kentlerde, söz konusu müştemilatın, gereksinme duyulduğu takdirde hastane ya da hapishane olarak kullanıldığı görülmektedir. Dolayısıyla bu makalede, öncelikle, Yahudiliğin ve Osmanlı Yahudi toplumunun vazgeçilmezi olan, çok işlevli kurumsal bir dini yapı ele alınmıştır. Bu yapı, bir yandan diaspora Yahudilerine ortak bir kimlik kazandırıp aidiyet sağlamakta ve bu aidiyeti koruma altına almakta, diğer yandan, gerek kent ve gerek diaspora coğrafyası bağlamında Yahudi topluluklarını âdeta bir tutkal gibi birleştirmekte ve bir arada tutmaktadır. O hâlde sinagogların, inşa edildikleri kentlerdeki Yahudi mahallesinin (Juderia'nın) tam merkezinde konumlanması ve mahallenin dini-toplumsal aidiyetini vurgulaması kaçınılmazdır.

Osmanlı Dönemi İzmir'inin en eski sinagoglarından biri olan *Portugal Sinagogu*, Portekiz kökenli Yahudiler tarafından 17. yüzyılın ilk yarısında (tahminen 1630'lu yıllarda) inşa edilmiştir. İnşa edildiği yer, İzmir, Osmanlılar tarafından fethedildikten sonra Yahudilerin ilk yerleştiği bölgelerden biri olan Pazar (Çarşı) yeriydi. Aynı zamanda, sahile ve İç Liman'a oldukça yakın bir konuma sahip olan bu bölge, büyük bir çoğunluğu ticaretle uğraşan Portekiz kökenli Yahudiler için oldukça cazipti. Muhtemelen bölgenin güçlü ticari aktivitesinden dolayı sinagog, 17. yüzyılın ikinci yarısından itibaren kentteki Yahudi yerleşim alanının tam merkezinde kalmıştı. Söz gelimi Sabetay Tsevi tarafından 1650'li ya da 1660'lı yıllarda kullanıldığı düşünülen ev, Portugal Sinagogu'nun tam karşısındaydı. 19. yüzyılın ilk yarısında inşa edilen Hahamhane ve Rothchild Hastanesi ise, sadece on metre ilerideydi. Yine aynı yüzyılın eseri, ihtişamlı yapı Lazaretto, Havra Sokağı'nın Dikilitaş Sokak ile birleştiği noktadaydı. Havra Sokağı ile Hahamhane'yi birbirine bağlayan ve Rothschild Hastanesi

yakınından son bulan Bohor Levi Sokak, Portugal Sinagogu'na teğet geçiyordu. Diğer sinagoglar ise, Portugal Sinagogu'na yakın mesafede inşa edilmişlerdi. 19. yüzyılın ikinci yarısında adları belirlenen Yahudi mahalleleri "Bene İsrael (İstiklal)", "Çavez (Kurtuluş)", "Tsontsino (Sakarya)", "Hahambaşı (Güzelyurt)", "Efrati (Güneş)", "Yeni" ve "Hurşidiye", Portugal Sinagogu'nun çevresini âdeta bir halka gibi sarmıştı. Yaklaşık olarak Portugal Sinagogu ile aynı tarihlerde inşa edildiğini belirlediğimiz diğer sinagog, Pinto Sinagogu'dur. Yeri, Smyrna Agorası kazı alanının hemen yanında Kadifekale eteğindeydi. Yahudi mahalleleri sinagoglar çevresinde şekillendiğine göre, İzmir Yahudilerinin 1630'lu yıllarda saptayabildiğimiz ilk yerleşim alanı, Portugal ile Pinto sinagogları arasında kalan topografyaydı. İzmir Yahudi Mahallesi'nin 1640 yılından itibaren yayıldığı alan, belli başlı sosyal ve dini yapıların inşa tarihlerinden yola çıkarak belirlenebilmektedir. Pazar yerinde bulunan *Neve Şalom Sinagogu*'nun kuruluş tarihi 1640'lı yıllardı. 1660 yılında *Senyora (Giveret) Sinagogu* inşa edilmişti. Senyora ve Neve Şalom Sinagogları arasındaki alanda 1660'lı yıllarda *Orehim (Foresteros)* ve *Algazi* sinagogları inşa edilmişti. Sinagogların yer aldığı ulaşım hattı ise, Havra Sokağı olarak tanımlanmıştı. Demek ki İzmir Yahudi Mahallesi, 1630 ile 1660 yılları arasında Portugal Sinagogu çevresindeki bölgede biraz Smyrna Agorası'na doğru, ama özellikle Pazar yeri ve İç Liman yönüne doğru yayılarak genişlemişti. Portugal Sinagogu'nun kentin ekonomik aktivitesi içerisindeki merkezi ve stratejik konumu, İzmir Yahudi Mahallesinin de onun çevresinde gelişip büyümesini sağlamıştı. O hâlde Portugal Sinagogu, İzmir Yahudi Mahallesinin kuruluş aşamasındaki başlangıç noktalarından biriydi.

Portugal Sinagogu, 12 Aralık 1665 tarihinde, Sabetay Tsevi ile ilişkili olayların tam merkezinde yer aldı. Olayların fitilini ateşleyen faktör, İstanbul Hahambaşılığının, Sabetay Tsevi'ye ilişkin herem (uzaklaştırma/aforoz) kararı verdiği ve lanetlediği mektubun İzmir Yahudi toplumuna okunmasıydı. Tsevi karşıtı olarak, Hayim Pena hedef seçildi. Şabat sabahı, Portugal Sinagogu'na ibadete giden Hayim Pena, ona büyük bir öfke duyan Sabetay Tsevi'nin, beş yüz müridi ile birlikte sinagogu basmasına neden oldu. Bu olaydan sonra Portugal Sinagogu, Sabetaycıların İzmir üssü olarak anıldı. Sinagog, İzmir'i yerle bir eden 1688 depreminde yıkıldı. 1772 ve 1841 yangınlarında ise, tamamen yanıp kül oldu. Her seferinde sinagog tekrar inşa edildi. 1976 yılında geçirdiği yangında büyük hasar gördü, tavanı ve tüm ahşap doğramaları yok oldu. Yangın sonrasında uzun yıllar depo olarak kullanılan yapının zemini ve duvarları çimento sıva ile kaplanmış, doğu ve kuzey duvarlarındaki tüm niş ve pencereler kapatılmıştı. Güney cephesinin doğu ucundaki pencere bir giriş açıklığına dönüştürülmüş, avlunun kuzey duvarındaki giriş açıklığı örülerek iptal edilmişti. Yangın ve sonrasındaki kötü müdahalelerle özgünlüğünü büyük ölçüde yitiren yapı, 2017-2018 yıllarında gerçekleştirilen restorasyon çalışmaları ile özgün hâline uygun bir şekilde ayağa kaldırıldı. Restorasyon çalışmaları, yapıyı sinagog olarak kullanıldığı yıllarda gören, hatta görev yapan kişilerin verdiği bilgiler, eski fotoğraflar, sıva raspaları ve

zemin araştırmaları ile elde edilen bulgulardan hareketle hazırlanan projeler doğrultusunda gerçekleştirildi ve 2019 yılından itibaren bir sivil toplum kuruluşu tarafından sosyal-kültürel tesis olarak kullanılmaya başlandı.

## Introduction

The etymological origin of the word 'synagogue' can be found in Ancient Greek as **συναγωγή**[1]. Plenty of evidence is available regarding the origins of synagogues as a place of faith and worship. These are mainly based on archaeological, epigraphic, and textual (written) sources. Researchers have different views on the origins of synagogues, leading to constant discussions on the issue. The reason for this is the contradiction between the interpretations of the words **συναγωγή**, **προσευχη**[2] and **בית הכנסת** [3], which are all included in the sources mentioned above and refer to a place of worship[4]. When such interpretations are classified, five different views emerge with regards to the origin of synagogues. The arguments put forth about the establishment of the first synagogue claim the following locations and times, respectively: on the Israeli territory in the 7th century BC; in Babylon during the Babylonian Exile; in Jerusalem upon return from the Babylonian Exile; in Egypt in the 3rd century BC; and finally during the Second Temple Period[5]. In fact, the words **προσευχη**, **συναγωγή** and **בית הכנסת** which are put forward as evidence, point to the evolution of religious structures built on the Israeli territory and in the diaspora sometime between the 7th century BC and the 1st century AD as multi-purpose gathering spaces[6]. This is the evolution of *synagogues*, which has become one of the main symbols unifying and binding the Jewish community over the years[7]. While ensuring the continuity of Jew-

1 Συναγωγή (Sunagogi) is an Ancient Greek word. In the New Testament it means "gathering place". In the Septuagint, the earliest translation of the Torah into Ancient Greek, it means "Community". Rachel Hachlili, "The Origin of the Synagogue: A Re-Assessment", *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period* 28/1(1997), 38. In Anatolia, a synagogue is also known as a "havra" (חברה) which is a Hebrew word, meaning unity.

2 This Ancient Greek word means "prayer house". According to some researchers, προσευχη (prosefchi) is the place where prayer, worship, divine command, and divine laws are learned. Hachlili "The Origin of the Synagogue: A Re-Assessment", 37.

3 This is a Hebrew word which means "meeting house".

4 Hachlili, "The Origin of the Synagogue: A Re-Assessment", 37. For researchers' comments on προσευχη and בית הכנסת (beit haknesset) also see Solomon Zeitlin, "The Origin of the Synagogue: A Study in the Development of Jewish Institutions", *Proceeding of the American Academy for Jewish Research vol. 2 (1930-1931)*, 69-81, accessed 11 August 2019, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3622132?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents. On the other hand, there are also some who argue that synagogues are a continuation of the ancient במות (bemot). Zeitlin, "The Origin of the Synagogue: A Study in the Development of Jewish Institutions", 74. Journal Article, "The Origin of the Synagogue", *Proceeding of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 1 (1928-1930), 49, accessed 11 August 2019, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3622182?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents. The Hebrew word במות is the plural of במה (bema) or בימה (bima) which means a high place or stage. It is defined as a sacrificial temple or altar that is unique to the Jewish tradition. The purpose of these buildings, which were built in rural areas, was to ensure that the people who cannot go on a long pilgrimage to Solomon's Temple gather to reach divine unity. Hachlili, "The Origin of the Synagogue: A Re-Assessment", 34.

5 Hachlili, "The Origin of the Synagogue: A Re-Assessment", 34-37.

6 Hachlili, "The Origin of the Synagogue: A Re-Assessment", 45. There is a comprehensive Turkish article about the synagogue. For detailed information on the origin of the synagogue, see İnci Türkoğlu, "Yahudi Geleneğinde Sinagog", *Toplumsal Tarih* 112 (Nisan 2003), 10-17. And also see İnci Türkoğlu, "Antik Çağdan Günümüze Türkiye'de Sinagog Mimarisi" (Master thesis, Ege University, 2001), 14-25.

7 The evolutionary stages of the synagogue can be summarized as follows: The buildings established and used in the years before the demolition of the second Solomon's Temple can be described, in general, as a Commu-

ish people as a religious and ethnic group, in addition to taking the common Jewish identity under protection, the main function of synagogues has been to provide the Jewish people with a sense of belonging and identity. This function is of particular importance for Jews of the diaspora that should be underlined due to its two-sided effect. It both reminds the diaspora of their ethnic and religious identity with its existence and also emphasizes a sense of belonging to the region where it was located in the city (the Jewish quarter - Juderia). Therefore, it will be appropriate to start our explanations regarding the Izmir Portugal Synagogue below by giving brief information about the Jewish Quarter of Izmir.

## Jewish Quarter of Izmir

Izmir was divided into five residential areas in the last quarter of the 16th century. These five areas are not the smallest administrative units related to local governments in the contemporary sense, but instead, they are settlements separately formed by religious communities consisting of individuals that lived in solidarity around their own places of worship. As a matter of fact, *places of worship and geographical identity* were set as basis for names of settlements until the neighbourhood structure was established in the city[8]. The demographic structure and topographic map of Izmir between the 17th and 18th centuries is described by historians and travellers as follows: Consulates of European nations and Levantines are settled in the western part of the city, in the luxurious and developed Frankish quarter between the sea and the Armenian quarter; the Greeks live to the north of a line drawn perpendicular to the sea from today's Basmane Station; Turks are in the south, in the area extending to the slopes of Kadifekale and Eşrefpaşa; and Jews live in the area between the Turkish and

nity meeting place and spiritual education center. On the other hand, it is very difficult to characterize them as places of faith and worship. They did not claim to be the agent of the Temple or to replace the Temple. As long as Solomon's Temple existed, they particularly avoided competition with it and just responded to local needs. Hachlili, "The Origin of the Synagogue: A Re-Assessment", 46. Following the destruction of Solomon's Temple by the Romans in 70 AD, the number of buildings established to serve as a gathering center for Jewish communities increased rapidly. On the other hand, the demolition of Solomon's Temple institutionalized these structures as synagogues. There are archaeological findings indicating the existence of the institutionalized structures from the end of the 2nd century AD (or the beginning of the 3rd century AD). Hachlili, "The Origin of the Synagogue: A Re-Assessment", 47. Since then, synagogues have been a combination of Torah-reading and compulsory prayer spaces. They have also been used as Community meeting rooms. Prayers are said facing Jerusalem, in the direction of where Solomon's Temple was once located. The direction is showed by the holy Torah Ark (ארון הקודש/Aron Hakodesh), which symbolizes Solomon's Temple and the Ark of the Covenant, that is, the true direction of worship. This Torah Ark is located on the synagogue wall, which shows the direction of Jerusalem. Unlike Solomon's Temple, there is no tradition of sacrifice in synagogues. Therefore, this holy place is not exclusively reserved for the Kohens, that is, the privileged clergy. Instead, it serves a crowded and participating Community. Hachlili, "The Origin of the Synagogue: A Re-Assessment", 43-46.

8 Erkan Serçe, "İzmir'de Muhtarlık Teşkilatının Kurulması ve İzmir Mahalleleri", *Kebikeç* 7-8 (1999), 159. The functioning of quarters in Ottoman cities did not show much change until the period of Mahmud II. For detailed information on the stages of the work on the establishment of the Organization of Mukhtar's Office in the Ottoman Empire, see also Serçe, "İzmir'de Muhtarlık Teşkilatının Kurulması ve İzmir Mahalleleri", 155-170.

Armenian quarters[9]. One of the earliest pieces of information on the Jewish quarters in Izmir is provided by Evliya Çelebi. Based on a census conducted by a certain Ismail Pasha, Evliya Çelebi states that in Izmir, there were about 2,000 houses on the slopes of Mount Pagos (Kadifekale) where there were ten Muslim, two Armenian, and one Gypsy quarters as well as ten French and Jewish quarters in 1068 AH according to the Islamic calendar (1657-1658 AD)[10]. We believe that this Jewish quarter also encompassed the Pazar Yeri (Bazaar), where the Portugal Synagogue was built, and that it was very close to the coastline and İç Liman (Inner Harbour). This theory originates from the fact that the Portugal Synagogue was built by Portuguese Jews (converses / marranos) in the 1630s, that is before the said census[11]. The boundaries of the quarters in Izmir expanded in the second half of the 18th century. The Jewish quarter was affected by the filling of the Inner Harbour, the Anafartalar Avenue becoming the main road from Başdurak to the Hisar Mosque, and the shifting of business centres towards the north – thus it stretched out both towards the south and to the east. In the 19th century the borders of the Jewish quarter were extending from the point where Ikiçeşmelik Avenue (currently known as Eşref Paşa Street) intersected with Anafartalar Avenue towards the Agora, Tilkilik and Basmane direction on one hand and to the settlement between Havra Street and Kestelli Street on the other hand. The whole Jewish quarters on both sides of Ikiçeşmelik Street were called *Juderia*. In the second half of the 19th century, seven Jewish quarters, whose names have been identified as Bene Israel, Chavez, Tsontsino, Hahambaşı, Efrati, Yeni, and Hurşidiye, would come to encircle the Portugal Synagogue[12]. The synagogue was located in the very centre of the Jewish settlement in the city, probably due to the strong commercial activity of the market area and its proximity to the harbour. For example, the house, which is thought to have been used by Sabetay Tsevi in the 1650-1660s, is just opposite the Portugal Synagogue. The Rabbinate and the Rothschild Hospital, both built in the first half of the 19th century, were situated only ten meters away. Lazaretto, the magnificent building of the same century, was located on the opposite side of İkiçeşmelik Avenue. Bohor Levi Street, which linked Havra Street and the Rabbinateand continuing to the Rothschild Hospital, passed right by the Portugal Synagogue. Other synagogues of the Jewish quarter were built near the Portugal Synagogue. Talmud Torah School was

9 Charles De Scherzer, *La Province Smyrne-Considérée au Point de vue Géographique, Économique et Intellectual* (Leipzig: G. Knapp, Libraire - Éditeur E. Nowak, 1880), 61. For detailed information on the Jewish quarters in the First Juderia in Izmir, see Siren Bora, *Karataş Hastanesi ve Çevresinde Yahudi İzleri* (İzmir: İzmir Büyükşehir Belediyesi Ahmet Piriştina Kent Arşivi ve Müzesi Yayını, 2015), 37-41.

10 Necmi Ülker, "Batılı Gözlemcilere göre XVII. Yüzyılın İkinci Yarısında İzmir Şehri ve Ticari Sorunları", *Tarih Enstitüsü Dergisi* 12 (1981), 326; Bora, *Karataş Hastanesi ve Çevresinde Yahudi İzleri*, 35.

11 Yaakov Barnay, (יעקב ברנאי), *Smyrna, The Microcosmos of Europe (המראה של אירופה),* (Jerusalem (ירושלים): Karmel (להוצאת כרמל), 2014, 73. The English spelling of the author's name is Jacob Barnai. Barnay's book was published in 2014. In this work, Barnay used all his articles concerning the Jews of Izmir previously published in Hebrew and English.

12 The quarter names of Judaeo-Spanish and Hebrew origin remained intact until 1923. All of them were Turkicized after the proclamation of the Republic. Bora, *Karataş Hastanesi ve Çevresinde Yahudi İzleri*, 37.

next to the Etz Hayim Synagogue, which was built on the other side of Havra Street. All cities and its neighbourhoods have stories and these stories are maintained by the buildings that carry the memory of their locations. The historical buildings and streets mentioned above, as a whole, not only reinforce the Juderia character of the region, but also tell a story about Judaism and the Jewish social and cultural lifestyle.

## Portuguese Jews (Conversos/Marranos)

Portuguese Jews (conversos / marranos) who founded the Portugal Synagogue migrated to Amsterdam[13], Livorno[14], Antwerp, Marseille and to the Ottoman lands in the last quarter of the 16th century[15]. Within the Ottoman lands the main cities where they settled in were Istanbul, Thessaloniki, Edirne and Safed, the most preferred one being Thessaloniki where they got close to the Frankos and even joined their community in time[16]. It is understood that Izmir also received an intense influx of conversos at the beginning of the 17th century: "*There was a small community in Izmir at first...Then there were those who came from Thessaloniki...Then came the Castile exiles...*"[17]. The Castile exiles (**גרושי קשטילייא/geruşey Kastilya**) mentioned in the text are exiles from Portugal[18].

The primary livelihood of the conversos was in the trade sector. In the 17th century, there were commercial consulates of Western countries in Izmir. The mediators were Armenian, Greek, and Jewish dragomans. It can be observed that the particularly favoured ones were the Portuguese Jews. The number of conversos engaged in international trade was quite high and most of them were rather wealthy. Some even owned mansions in Florence and Marseille. Furthermore, they had family members and friends of Portuguese origin who owned commercial agencies in Amsterdam, Cyprus, Florence, Gibraltar, Marseille, and Venice. It can even be said that the Portuguese diaspora established a comprehensive and effective international trade network. Conversos that came under the auspices of Western state consulates in the course of time started to gain an important domination over trade in Izmir[19]. Their main occu-

13 Jonathan Israel, "Sephardic Immigration into the Dutch Republic (1595-1672)", *Studia Rosenthaliana* 23 (Fall 1989), 45.

14 Joseph Abraham Levi, "Portuguese Jews of the Diaspora: Italy and Beyond", *Encyclopedia of the Jewish Diaspora*, vol. 3, ed. M. Avram Ehrlich (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2009), 876.

15 Jonathan Ray, "Iberian Jewry between West and East: Jewish Settlement in the Sixteenth-Century Mediterranean", *Mediterranean Studies* 18 (2009), 52.

16 Barnay, *Smyrna, The Microcosmos of Europe,* 53. According to Barnay, the origin of the conversos that migrated to the Ottoman cities is not clear. This uncertainty is true for Izmir as well. Barnay, *Smyrna, The Microcosmos of Europe,* 54.

17 This is quoted from Rabbi Avraham Aligri. We gave the abbreviated form of the quotation here. For details, see Barnay, *Smyrna, The Microcosmos of Europe,* 54.

18 Barnay, *Smyrna, The Microcosmos of Europe,* 54.

19 Barnay gives two examples of this. One of these concerns the Portugal and Italian Jews, who came under the auspices of the French Consulate in Izmir. The other is from an Ottoman document dated 1696: "*...There was*

pation apart from trade was medicine. There were important doctors among conversos in Izmir. For example, Dr. Avraham Baruh, who was appointed as King of Portugal by Sabbatai Tsevi, was a converso. Dr. Avraham Mihal Kordoza and Dr. Karon were among the followers of Tsevi[20]. The Gabay family, a former converso family, had established a printing house in Izmir[21].

## The Portugal Synagogue

The Portugal Synagogue, one of the oldest synagogues of Ottoman Izmir, was built in the 1630s[22]. The synagogue community was not only composed of Portuguese Jews; it is thought that migrants from other places also joined the community over time[23]. There is evidence that the synagogue existed in 5404 (1653-1654 AD). In an answer given by Rabbi Danyel Esterosa to a question asked in a responsa, there are several references to *converso members of the Portugal Synagogue*. The answer continues: *Converso members of the Portugal Synagogue, God bless them*[24]. Shortly after its establishment, the synagogue was destroyed in the 1688 earthquake that brought Izmir to the ground. It was then completely burnt in the 1772 and 1841 fires. It was however rebuilt after each disaster[25]. It underwent revisions many times. Evidence also indicates that the synagogue received charitable donations from time to time. One of these donations was a fountain built in the courtyard of the synagogue in

*a dispute over the surety of the Jews who settled in Izmir. It was asked whether they were Ottoman subjects. In the dispute between the French and Dutch consulates, the Ottoman Sultan intervened and said that those Jewish merchants were Jews from Portugal who settled in Izmir for commercial purposes...*" Barnay, *Smyrna, The Microcosmos of Europe,* 54.

20 For the converso influence in Sabbateanism in the following years, also see Cengiz Şişman, *Suskunluğun Yükü-Sabatay Sevi ve Osmanlı Türk Dönmelerinin Evrimi* (İstanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2016), 104-107.

21 Barnay, *Smyrna, The Microcosmos of Europe,* 55-58. Yaakov Barnay gave examples for converso names used in from Izmir such as *Nonis*, *Aryas*, *Koronel*, *Pineyro* and *Enrikes*. For more information, see Barnay, *Smyrna, The Microcosmos of Europe,* 57.

22 There is a misconception that The Izmir Etz Hayim Synagogue is a Byzantine Period Synagogue. The main reason for this is Avram Galante's evaluation in one of his works. In his book, Galante claims that all the synagogues named Etz Hayim (Tree of Life) in the Ottoman cities were built during the Byzantine period. See Avram Galante, *Histoire de Juifs d'Anatolie - Les Juifs d'Izmir* (*Smyrne*). (İstanbul: İsis Yayınları, 1937), 10. His reference for this information is Şlomo Avraham Rozanes. See Barnay, *Smyrna, The Microcosmos of Europe*, 69. In another work, Galante specifies the period under Ottoman rule for the construction date of Izmir Etz Hayim Synagogue. See Avram Galante, *Türkler ve Yahudiler* (İstanbul: Tan Matbaası, 1947), 9. Probably, he corrected the misinterpretation in his previous work. Esther Juhasz and Yaakov Barnay state that the claim regarding the Etz Hayim Synagogues is a legend. See Ester Juhasz, "Synagogues", *Sephardi Jews in the Ottoman Empire*. (The Israel Museum: Jerusalem, 1989), 45. Barnay, *Smyrna, The Microcosmos of Europe*, 82. The oldest evidence for Izmir Etz Hayim Synagogue dates to the 18th century. See Barnay, *Smyrna, The Microcosmos of Europe,* 82. Also for detailed information, see Siren Bora, *Karataş Hastanesi ve Çevresinde Yahudi İzleri*, 14. Therefore, the oldest of the synagogues available in Izmir today is the Portugal Synagogue.

23 Barnay, *Smyrna, The Microcosmos of Europe,* 73.

24 Barnay, *Smyrna, The Microcosmos of Europe,* 74.

25 For information on the reconstruction of Izmir synagogues after the 1841 fire, see Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi / Ottoman Archives of the Prime Minister (BOA), Cevdet Adliye / Cevdet Judicial (C.ADL.) 101/6074, 29 Zilkade 1255(3 Şubat 1840).

1801 by Şemaya Perpinyan Çavuş (See. ANNEX B)[26]. During the restoration works dated 2017-2018, a broken water basin was found in the courtyard. However, the original location of the reservoir could not be determined. After being burnt down in the 1841 fire, some prominent Western Jews and some members of the Izmir Jewish Community donated money to the synagogue while it was being rebuilt in the 1850s. Two marble inscriptions in Judeo-Spanish language, one of which is now broken, once hung in the courtyard of the Portugal Synagogue. These inscriptions contained the names of the benefactors in question. The complete inscription plaque bears the names of the Western benefactors: *Anglo Jewish Association, Henri L. Bishoffsheim*, *Comtes A.&N. De Camondo, Julian Goldsmidt Bart, S. H. Goldsmidt, Salomon Halfon de Bucharest, Isaac S. Kann de Paris, Isaac Leon & Fils, Nissim Abraham Leon, Barons de Rothschild Freres, Barons N. de Rothschild & Sons, Emanuel Veneziani*[27]. The broken inscription bears the names of the local Smyrniot benefactors. The names that can be read on this inscription are: *Hayim Habif*, *Hayim Politi Argi*, *Ahim Taranto Gabay*, *Jak Sidi*, *Hayim S. Şonsol*, *Yuda*,and *Moşe Sidi*[28]. The date in the Hebrew inscription on the main gate of the synagogue is 1909. This date suggests the possibility that the Portugal Synagogue underwent yet another restoration in 1909: *This is the door of God, only the righteous ones enter. May the Portugal Synagogue the House in Tsiyon (*Beit HaMikdash*) prosper Year 1909*[29].On the other hand, several pages of the Book of Psalms (Tehillim) were discovered under the plaster in the synagogue. These pages belong to the Psalms 69, 72, 73, and 74 (See ANNEX C)[30]. The possible purpose of placing these pages under plaster must have been to ensure the protection of the synagogue by God.

In 1962, John Freely described the Portugal Synagogue upon his visit to Izmir with the following words: "*(...) Jacob got us into a spacious courtyard using a rusty key to open the door. Traces of horse carriage wheels could be seen in the courtyard paved with wide paving stones. Jacob said that the domed structure on the other side of the courtyard was (...) the Portuguese Synagogue*[31]. As can be deduced from the description, the synagogue had a large courtyard in 1962. In the following years, probably a part of the courtyard was divided to be used for the construction of another building; thus, the courtyard became a short and narrow passage.

26 This marble inscription was found by the workers under the plaster on the courtyard wall of the Portugal Synagogue during the restoration in 2017-2018. A broken water reservoir was found in the same courtyard as well.

27 Siren Bora, "İzmir'de Yahudi Kültürel Mirası: İbranice Yazıtlar", *Cihannüma: Tarih ve Coğrafya Araştırmaları Dergisi* II/1 (July 2016), 21.

28 Bora, "İzmir'de Yahudi Kültürel Mirası: İbranice Yazıtlar", 22.

29 Bora, "İzmir'de Yahudi Kültürel Mirası: İbranice Yazıtlar", 20-21.

30 They were found during the restoration in 2017-2018. The Book of Psalms 72, 73, and 74 refer to the house of God and the sacred temple. The temple must be Solomon's Temple. See *Kitab-ı Mukaddes-Eski ve Yeni Ahit* (İstanbul: Kitab-ı Mukaddes Şirketi Yayını, 1988), 581-583.

31 John Freely, *Kayıp Mesih* (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 2003), 21-22.

## The Portugal Synagogue and Sabbatai Tsevi

Portugal Synagogue is known to have been at the centre of events related to Sabbatai Tsevi on 12 December 1665. The starting point of the events was Rabbi Hayim Benveniste reading the letter from the Office of the Chief Rabbi in Istanbul to the community, which said that the Office of the Chief Rabbi of Istanbul had excommunicated and cursed Sabbatai Tsevi. The events were incited with rumours that rabbis regarded Tsevi with hostility. On Friday, 11 December 1665, a group of Sabbataeists attacked Hayim Pena with the reasoning that Pena supported Rabbi Hayim Benveniste, who had read the letter. Pena took refuge in his own house, which was stoned by the attackers. The next day was Sabbath, so the crowd dispersed. When Hayim Pena went to the Portugal Synagogue on Sabbath morning for worship, Sabbatai Tsevi raided the synagogue with all his anger and 500 of his followers. First, Tsevi demanded the "unbeliever" Pena be ostracized from the community. When this demand was declined, he started to destroy the locked door of the synagogue with an axe. Upon this attack, those who were inside opened the door while Pena escaped from the window. Tsevi's followers flooded the synagogue and Tsevi conducted the ritual in contradiction with tradition[32]. After this event, the Portugal Synagogue started to be referred to as the Izmir base of the Sabbataeists.

## Cultural, social, administrative, and legal activities at the Portugal Synagogue

Synagogues have many functions and bear names that represent these functions. A synagogue is a **בית התפילה** (prayer house), a **בית הכנסת** (meeting house) and a **בית המדרש** (study house)[33] all at once. Classes used for lectures (especially for Hebrew and religious classes) were incorporated in the building during construction. *Şirutey Habanim Association*, which was established within the Portugal Synagogue on 18 June 1912, can be given as an example for the **בית המדרש** (study house) feature of the synagogue (see ANNEX A). In addition, this association also undertook charity activities. Every Saturday, the Book of Psalms (Tehillim) was taught and clothes were provided for poor students. Synagogues played a central role in prayers, festivals, and holy days. Therefore, they had a hall that served as a venue for bar mitzvah, weddings, community and club meetings, and also conferences[34]. In addition, synagogues were used as judicial centres, a court run by experienced rabbis who also held the title of a judge.

Two pages of each issue of *La Boz de Türkiye*, a biweekly journal which started to be published in Istanbul on 1 August 1939, were dedicated to news related to the Jew-

32 Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatai Şevi-The Mystical Messiah* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989), 395-402.

33 Accessed 11 August 2019, https://www.britannica.com/topic/synagogue .

34 "The Uses of Synagogues", accessed 11 August 2019. http://resource.download.wjec.co.uk.s3.amazonaws.com/vtc/2015-16/15-16_17/unit1/pdf/eng/judaism-synagogue-uses-background-notes.pdf.

ish Community in Izmir penned by Yakub Bensinyor[35]. Scanning through the issues published between 15 May 1940 and 15 May 1949, 19 news pieces were found relating to conferences and festivals held at the Portugal Synagogue[36]. On the other hand, there were only a very few news pieces about the meetings held in other synagogues, such as Etz Hayim, Algazi, Hevra, Neve Shalom, and Senyora, all located in the same area. During the aforementioned ten-year period, there were two Jewish quarters in Izmir. One was the First Juderia in İkiçeşmelik, and the other was the Second Juderia in Karataş. It was observed that the news pieces in question highlights the Portugal Synagogue in İkiçeşmelik and the Beit Israel Synagogue in Karataş. It even gives the impression that these two synagogues were the main gathering centres of the Jewish Community living in the First and Second Juderia respectively[37]. On the other hand, the news about the Portugal Synagogue in *La Boz* was interrupted after 1 August 1948. The foundation date of the State of Israel is 14 May 1948. Particularly after the establishment of the state, the majority of poor Jewish families living in Ikiçeşmelik left Izmir and migrated to Israel[38]. The migration, which began in 1948 and continued until the 1960s, drastically reduced the Jewish population in Ikiçeşmelik. In time, the remaining families left this neighbourhood to settle in Karataş. However, it should be noted that the synagogues of Ikiçeşmelik were not abandoned by the Izmir Jewish Community. For many years, the members of the community, especially on the Sabbath days, made it a tradition to travel from Karataş to Ikiçeşmelik to attend the prayer held in one of the synagogues that was opened that day. Today, there are four active synagogues in Ikiçeşmelik (Algazi, Neve Shalom[39], Senyora and Bikur Holim) but only one is opened for worship each week in alternating turns. And today, the Portugal Synagogue serves the city only as a meeting place for cultural events.

## Architectural Elements of the Portugal Synagogue and its Restoration

The Portugal Synagogue was damaged in the great fire of 1841 along with many other synagogues around it and it was rebuilt in the 1850s. It was an active synagogue

35 It was published between 1 August 1939 and 15 May 1949. The publisher was Albert Kohen (Erkösem). For more information about the journal, see Naim Güleryüz, *Türk Yahudi Basın Tarihi*. (İstanbul: Gözlem Gazetecilik Basın ve Yayın A.Ş., 2015), 89-94.

36 Sami Kohen Private Archive (SCPA), *La Boz de Türkiye* 15 Mai 1940, 442; 15 Decembre 1940, 194 ; 15 Janvier 1941, 23; 1 Janvier 1942, 225 ; 1 Octobre 1942, 111; 11 Decembre 1942, 158; 8 Mars 1943, 173; 1 Mai 1943, 223; 15 Juin 1943, 261; 1 Decembre 1943, 17; 15 Avril 1944, 281; 1 Juin 1944, 333; 15 Juin 1944, 348; 1 Janvier 1945, 178; 1 Octobre 1945, 65; 1 Avril 1946, 258; 1 Septembre 1947, 91; 1 Aout 1948, 11.

37 As a matter of fact, Rabbi Refael Saban, who came to Izmir in 1948, gave speeches only in two synagogues. One of them is Beit Israel Synagogue and the other is Portugal Synagogue. *La Boz de Türkiye*, 1 Aout 1948, 11.

38 An example of families leaving Izmir on 6 February 1949: "(...) On the evening of February 6th, the Sabbath evening, the Eti ship departed from the port of Izmir to Haifa with 1300 tons of material and 1049 passengers. 373 of the passengers were from the Izmir Community..." *La Boz de Türkiye* 15 Mars 1949, 237.

39 The Neve Shalom Synagogue is incorrectly referred to as Shalom Synagogue by Izmir Jews as well as many articles and books about the Synagogues of Izmir. According to Hebrew archive sources, the name of the synagogue is Neve Shalom. See Bora, "İzmir'de Yahudi Kültürel Mirası: İbranice Yazıtlar", 31.

until 1976, but lost its function when it was destroyed by fire that year, and then it turned into a warehouse. The structure, which was heavily damaged in the fire, was subject to erroneous interventions during its use as a warehouse and in time lost its authentic elements[40].

The Izmir Jewish Community, which was the title owner of the building, assigned the building to a non-governmental organization - the Aegean Young Businessmen Association (Ege Genç İş Adamları Derneği) - for twenty years with a protocol signed in 2015 for the building to be restored and used for social-cultural purposes. The projects were prepared for the restoration of the building in 2016, and the restoration was carried out in 2017-2018 by Umart Architecture.

The Portugal Synagogue has a rectangular plan on a north-south axis. The building consists of a prayer hall 15.10x9.90m in size, a 9.90mx5.14m midrash[41]to its north, and an ezrat nashim[42] above the midrash. There is a courtyard to the west of the building. The building, which was built of stone and brick materials, is now surrounded by modern buildings from the north and east. Only the western and southern façades are perceptible. It has four windows on the southern façade and seven windows on the west. The window in the centre of the western façade, where the tevah [43](bimah)[44] was located, is rectangular in shape and larger than the other windows which have a semi-circular arch.

The courtyard to the west of the building is 21.00x2.50m in size. It is accessed through a portal with marble jambs, lintel, and a triangular pediment. There are ornaments consisting of acanthus leaves on the jambs and lintel of the portal. On the inner face of the portal facing the courtyard, in the middle of the triangular pediment there is a depiction of what seems to be a figure of a deer.

In the 1976 fire, the roof and interior fittings of the building were completely destroyed. The wooden elements belonging to the midrash and ezrat nashim in the north burnt down, and the arrangement of the space was disrupted. Although it was originally covered with a hipped roof, simple metal sheets were placed for protection during

40 There are some publications that give some information about the architectural features of the building. See Mine Tanaç Zeren, *İzmir'de Sefarad Mimarisi ve Sinagogları* (İstanbul: Yalın Yayıncılık, 2010), 168; Zeynep Mercangöz, "Dinsel Yapılar Mimarisi II: Kiliseler ve Sinagoglar", *İzmir Kent Ansiklopedisi, Mimarlık 1* (İzmir: İzmir Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kent Yayınları, 2013), 182.

41 Midrash is an educational institution. The equivalent term in Islamic literature is Madrasah. The Midrash section in the synagogue has two usages: 1- It is the section reserved for teaching by synagogue rabbis. 2- If the synagogue is large and the number of worshippers (יחידים/yahidim) is small, it serves as a place of worship. Therefore, a midrash is at the same time a small synagogue.

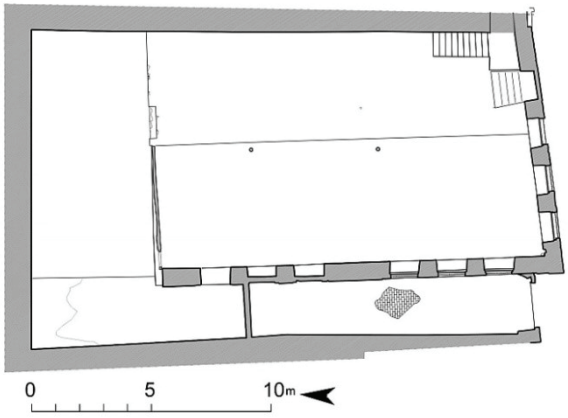
42 In the synagogue, a gallery or a place behind a curtain reserved specifically for women to sit. Yusuf Besalel, *Yahudilik Ansiklopedisi,* vol. 1(A-J) (İstanbul: Gözlem Gazetecilik Basın ve Yayın A.Ş., 2001), 171.

43 The name given to the prayer reading desk by Sephardic Jews. Yusuf Besalel, *Yahudilik Ansiklopedisi,* vol. 3 (S-Z), (İstanbul: Gözlem Gazetecilik Basın ve Yayın A.Ş., 2002), 734.

44 The name given to the prayer reading desk by Ashkenazi Jews. Besalel, *Yahudilik Ansiklopedisi,* vol. 3, 734.

its usage as a warehouse. The original floor slabs in the courtyard, midrash and prayer hall were covered with cement mortar. A wall was put up on the northern part of the courtyard, thereby disconnecting the building from the courtyard, and the floor of the northern part of the courtyard was raised. The wall beneath the window on the eastern corner of the southern façade was broken and turned into an entrance. Access to the building was provided through this opening. The windows on the western façade, the entrance opening on the north wall of the courtyard opening to the passage behind it, the *aron hakodesh*[45] niches on the eastern wall, and the windows and niches on the northern, and eastern walls of the midrash were blocked off with bricks and a thick layer of plaster (F. 1-F. 6).

The information provided by people who saw the building in its original function[46], two old photographs, and traces obtained from the building itself were taken into consideration in the preparation of the restoration projects of the building, the original elements of which had almost completely disappeared during and in the aftermath of the 1976 fire (F. 7). Two anonymous photographs belonging to the period prior to the 1976 fire gathered from the Izmir Jewish Community provided us with important information about the arrangement of the prayer hall (F.8, F. 9)[47]. The floor and plaster cleaning performed during the restoration work also gave important clues about the original fittings of the building.




**F. 1.** Pre-restoration plan (from Umart Architecture)

45 The ark that houses the Holy Scrolls in the synagogue. Besalel, *Yahudilik Ansiklopedisi*, vol.1, 73.

46 We would like to thank Refael Dias who worked in the building as a hazan for many years and provided us with important information about the original condition of the building as well as Selim Amado and Moshe Benmayor for their valuable contributions.

47 We would also like to thank Nesim Bencoya for providing the photographs.

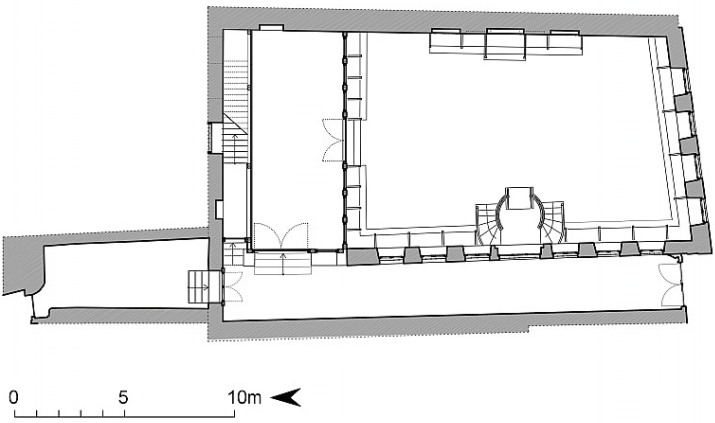
**F. 2.** Pre-restoration, southern façade and courtyard entrance (Mehmet Yasa, 2017)

**F. 3.** Pre-restoration, southern façade (Mehmet Yasa, 2017)

**F. 4.** Pre-restoration, courtyard and western façade (Mehmet Yasa, 2017)

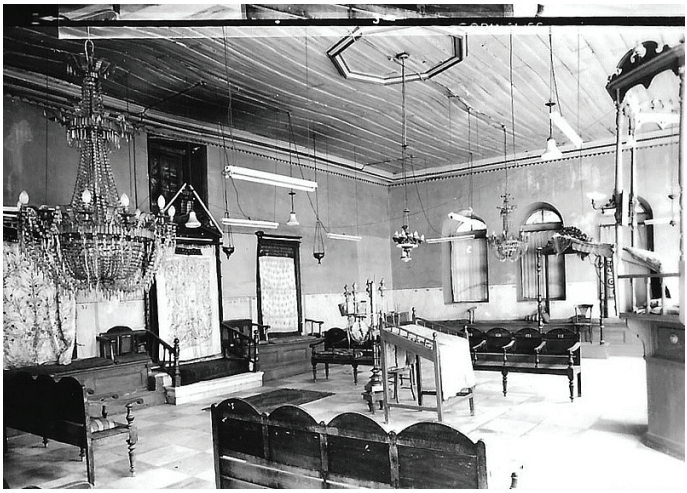
**F. 5.** Pre-restoration, prayer hall (Mehmet Yasa, 2017)

**F. 6.** Pre-restoration, midrash (Mehmet Yasa, 2017)




**F. 7.** Restitution plan (from Umart Mimarlık)

**F. 8.** Western part of prayer hall before the 1976 fire (Anonymous)



**F. 9.** Southern and eastern part of prayer hall before the 1976 fire (Anonymous)

The prayer hall of the building can be seen to a large extent in two photographs taken from different angles before 1976. The photographs provide an idea about the eastern, western, and southern walls, the wooden benches surrounding the prayer hall, the floor paving, and the original shape of the ceiling. The tevah (bimah) adjacent to the western wall and the aron hakodesh niches on the eastern wall can also be clearly distinguished in the photographs. The galiot shaped tevah (bimah) is adjacent

to the western wall– a feature that distinguishes the Portugal Synagogue from other synagogues in Izmir in which the tevah (bimah) is usually located in the centre of the prayer hall and sometimes adjacent to the eastern wall[48].

The photographs have shown that the prayer hall was covered with a slatted ceiling comprising 18 cm wide wooden slats placed on a north-south axis including a central octagon and completely surrounded by a saw-tooth frieze. The old photograph showing the eastern wall also displays the aron hakodesh niches and a window above the central niche which is reached by two steps. All three cabinets are covered with a parochet[49]. The niches and the upper window that were closed off after the 1976 fire were uncovered through meticulous craftsmanship during the restoration work. The traces of fire in the upper window were preserved during the work.

The photographs show that the floor of the prayer hall was paved with black and white marble slabs. During the restoration work, all the necessary procedures were performed to reveal the slabs which had been covered with cement mortar after the fire, but unfortunately almost all of them were broken into pieces.

Although the old photographs of the building provide us with important information about the prayer hall, no photographs or documents were encountered pertaining to the original condition of the midrash and ezrat nashim (women's gallery), located to the north of the prayer hall. However, the traces that emerged during the restoration work allowed us to gain sufficient data about the arrangement of this section. After the removal of the wall that was built during the warehouse phase of the synagogue in the northern part of the courtyard, the floor filling was cleared, uncovering the original floor and the steps leading to the midrash and ezrat nashim. (F. 10). The entrance with stone jambs located on the northern wall of the courtyard that had been covered with plaster was also brought to light. The ground level of the midrash is lower than that of the prayer hall. As a result of the cleaning work it was discovered that the floor of the midrash had been paved with cement tiles which was in partially preserved condition. While cleaning the plaster, a rectangular cabinet niche was exposed on the eastern wall of the midrash (F. 11). It was determined that the prayer hall could be reached from the midrash via two steps and that the ezrat nashim, located on the upper floor of the midrash, was entered through a separate door from the courtyard and was reached by a wooden stairway leaning to the eastern part of the northern wall. A cabinet niche and three windows were revealed from beneath the plaster on the northern wall (F. 11). The large window with a semi-circular arch in the centre of the northern wall must have served to shed light to the stairwell that provided access to the ezrat nashim as well as the ezrat nashim itself. Fragmentary remains of a fresco depicting a natural

48 Tanaç Zeren, *İzmir'de Sefarad Mimarisi ve Sinagogları*, 167-168.

49 A cover laid on the aron hakodesh in the synagogue. Yusuf Besalel, *Yahudilik Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 2 (K-R), (İstanbul: Gözlem Gazetecilik Basın ve Yayın A.Ş., 2001), 477.

scene were uncovered on the pediment of the window. The original iron joinery wings of the window have also been preserved. The other two windows are located on the ezrat nashim floor, on the eastern corner of the northern wall. Rectangular windows have iron bars.

The restoration of the Portugal Synagogue, which had largely lost its original elements in the 1976 fire and in the subsequent erroneous interventions, was carried out based on the restitution datalisted above.

**F. 10**. Steps leading from the courtyard to the midrash (Şakir Çakmak, 2017)

**F. 11.** Windows and niches revealed on the northern wall (Şakir Çakmak, 2017)

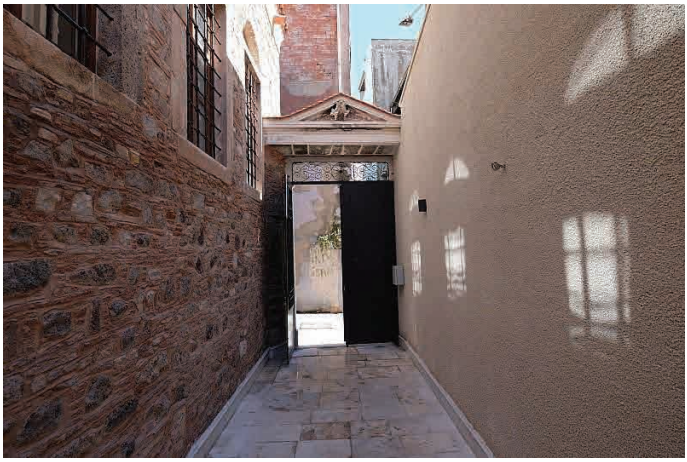
The stone brick masonry of the southern and western façades was preserved by cleaning and grouting. The window, which was later converted into an entrance in the eastern part of the southern façade was restored back to its original form (F. 12, F. 13). The courtyard floor was cleaned, and the original marble slabs were preserved (F. 14).

Old photographs were used in the restoration of the prayer hall according to which the ceiling was built with wood with a central octagon and an ornamental frieze surrounding the ceiling. On the exterior, the hipped roof has been covered with tiles (F. 15, F. 16).

During the cleaning work performed on the floor of the prayer hall it was discovered that the marble slabs were greatly damaged by the erroneous interventions during the use of the building as a warehouse. The remains indicate that the slabs were 57x57cm in size, and thus were replaced with new marble slabs of the same size (F. 15).

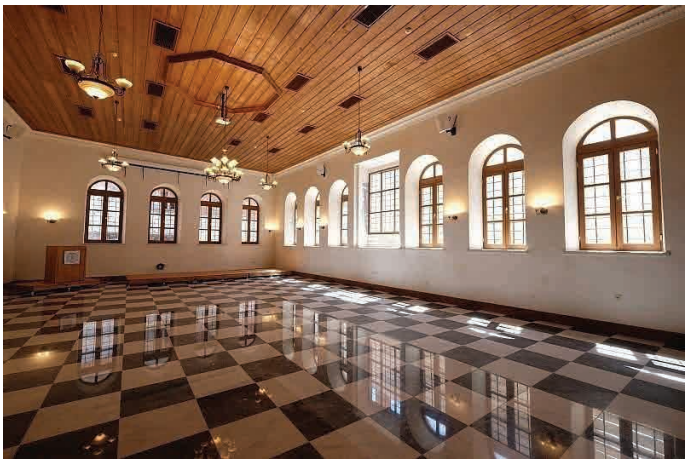
**F. 12.** Post-restoration, southern façade and courtyard entrance (Mehmet Yasa, 2018)

**F. 13.** Post-restoration, southern façade (Mehmet Yasa, 2018)



**F. 14.** Post-restoration, courtyard and western façade (Mehmet Yasa, 2018)

**F. 15.** Post-restoration, prayer hall (Mehmet Yasa, 2018)



**F. 16.** Post-restoration, prayer hall (Mehmet Yasa, 2018)

The marble steps providing access to the midrash and ezrat nashim from the courtyard have been fully preserved. The well preserved cement tiles uncovered on the midrash floor were kept in-situ while the damaged parts were completed with new materials complying with the original (F. 17, F. 18).

**F. 17.** Post-restoration, midrash (Mehmet Yasa, 2018)

**F. 18.** Post-restoration, midrash (Mehmet Yasa, 2018)

The entrance opening with stone jambs providing access to the passage in the north from the courtyard was repaired, and kitchen and WC facilities were added in the passage (F. 19). The windows associated with the ezrat nashim on the northern wall were preserved with their original iron joinery wings and bars. Conservation procedures were also carried out on the remains of the fresco discovered on the semi-circular arched window in the centre of the northern wall (F. 20).

**F. 19.** Post-restoration, northern part of courtyard (Mehmet Yasa, 2018)

**F. 20.** Window and fresco remains on northern wall (Mehmet Yasa, 2018)

The traces detected on the northern wall during the restoration work shed light on the position of the steps leading from the midrash to the ezrat nashim and the ceiling height of the midrash. However, no data on the wooden construction separating the midrash and ezrat nashim from the courtyard and prayer hall could be obtained. Therefore, the wooden separator at Etz Hayim Synagogue[50], which shows similarities to the Portugal Synagogue in terms of its plan, served as a model for a very simplistic solution which would not lead to a false perception of the original structure.

50 Tanaç Zeren, *İzmir'de Sefarad Mimarisi ve Sinagogları*, 290-291.

## Conclusion

The most important factor that contributed to the growth and development of the Jewish Community of Izmir is Jewish immigrants. In the second half of the 16th century, a large number of Jewish immigrants who initially came from surrounding cities (especially Tire, Manisa), and then from Istanbul, Ankara, Patras, Safed, Thessaloniki and the Aegean islands settled in Izmir. In the 17th century, we see Portuguese (Marranos / Conversos) Jews who came from Italy, Western Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean. Jewish groups from different geographical regions never acted as part of a whole in Izmir. They created their congregations according to their geographical origins and built their own synagogues. At the beginning (till the Neve Shalom Synagogue was established), The Portugal Synagogue played the role of central synagogue of the Portuguese Jews. In 5377 (1617),during the time of Rabbi Yitzhak Dayan Halevi[51], there was only one synagogue in Izmir. It is probably the Bakish (Sason or Eben Kish) Synagogue which was built in 1616-1617[52]. Then the Portugal Synagogue (founded in the 1630s) belonging to the Portuguese Community and the Pinto Synagogue (founded in the 1630s or 1640s) belonging to the Tire Community and then the Neve Shalom Synagogue (founded in the 1640s) also belonging to the Portuguese Community were established. The name and place of the fifth synagogue which must have existed in the city in 1636 is not known. This synagogue must have belonged to the Jews from Thessaloniki[53]. Among these synagogues, only the Portugal and the Neve Shalom synagogues have survived to the present day. The 400-year-old Portugal Synagogue is the oldest preserved synagogue in Izmir. Throughout its history it has witnessed many events. It suffered large-scale fires and earthquakes but was restored after each event. Between 1948 and 1960, the synagogue lost its congregation **(יחידים/ yahidim**) and suffered a major fire in 1976. In spite of all these misfortunes, it was revived with meticulous restoration work following information obtained from old photographs, witnesses and traces in the building. Since 2019, the Portugal Synagogue has been hosting various social and cultural events such as meetings and exhibitions.

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51 Rabbi Yitzhak Dayan Halevi is the son of Rabbi Meir Dayan Halevi. Came to the city, from Istanbul. Barnay, *Smyrna, The Microcosmos of Europe,* 160.

52 Barnay, *Smyrna, The Microcosmos of Europe,* 70.

53 Barnay, *Smyrna, The Microcosmos of Europe,* 65-82.

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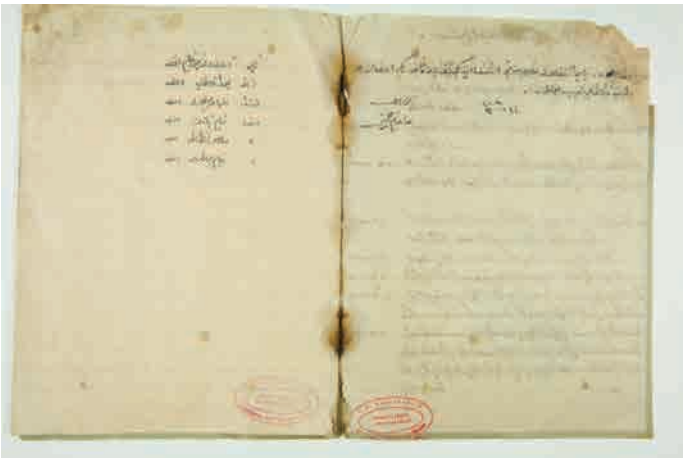
# ANNEXES

## ANNEX A- The Internal Regulations of Shirutey Habanim Association[54].



A1- The translation[55] of the Internal Regulations of Şirutey Habanim[56]Association

*"The Internal Regulations of Şirutey Habanim Association*

54 Ottoman Archives of the Prime Minister (BOA), Dahiliye Nezareti Emniyyet-i Umumiye Müdürlüğü Tahrirat Kalemi/The Ministry of the Interior General Directorate of Security, Correspondence Documents (DH.EUM. THR.) 101/19, 30 Ramadan 1330 (12 Eylül 1912).

55 It was first translated from Ottoman Turkish to modern Turkish and transcribed with Latin letters. The English translation was made from the modern Turkish verions.

56 These two Hebrew words, *Şirutey*-שירותי (services) *Habanim*-הבנים (to children) mean Services to Children.

*Article 1- <<Şirutey Habanim>> Association, located within the Portugal Synagogue in Izmir, is obliged to teach the glorious Book of Psalms to mixed Jewish School students and the Jewish children living in the industrial field every week on Saturdays.*

*Article 2- Persons wishing to remain as members of the Association are obliged to give 4 or 8 metelik (1 or 2 kurush) per month.*

*Article 3- Each year on Passover, the money remaining after salaries are paid to muezzins, hodjas, and guards will be used to provide clothes for poor people who come to read the Book of Psalms.*

*Article 4- If the remaining money is not enough to provide clothes, a special cinema show will be held for the benefit of the community before Passover.*

*Article 5- The Association is governed by an administrative board consisting of six members registered below.*

*Article 6- This Association is a religious association and it is strictly forbidden to engage in disputes and politics.*

*Article 7- Although the Association was established on 1 March 1325 (14 March 1909), it stopped working and was closed for two months after the said date. However, it was re-established on 5 June 1328 (18 June 1912).*

*Article 8- The third article of this Charter is amended as follows: Clothes will be provided to the orphans and poor children who are to continue studying the Book of Psalms with the money remaining after yearly salaries are paid to muezzins, hodjas, servants, and guards before Passover every year.*

*If one member resigns for private reasons, his successor is appointed by a majority vote of the other members.*

*Year 6 March 328 (19 March 1912)* *Official Seal*

*Şirutey Habanim Association*

*President Aron's son Bohor Hayim Efendi*

*Vice president Yuda Falaçi*[57] *Efendi*

*Cashier İsak Çikurel Efendi*

*Member Hayim Benazuz Efendi*

*" Salamon Algranti Efendi*

*" Hayim Yomtof*[58] *Efendi"*

57 The correct spelling must be Palachi.
58 The correct spelling must be Yomtov.

## ANNEX B- The marble inscription found under plaster in the courtyard of the synagogue during the restoration[59].

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| מעיה [ש] | (Ş)emaya | (Ş)emaya | (Ş)emaya |
| פירפינייאן | Perpinyan | Perpinyan | Perpinyan |
| ’גאוש | Çavuş | Çavuş | Sergeant |
| זיביל אלה | Zibil Allah | SebilAllah[60] | Fountain of God |
| קק | Kahal Kadoş | Kutsal Sinagog | Sacred Synagogue |
| פורטוגאל | Portugal | Portugal | Portugal |
| שנת | Şanat | Sene | Year |
| התקסא | Hataksa | 5561 | 1801 |

59 Photograph, Siren Bora Private Archive (SBPA). This marble inscription mentioning the fountain is related to a water source that should be located in the courtyard. As a matter of fact, during the restoration work of the synagogue, a small and half-broken basin was found in the courtyard near the gate of the synagogue. It probably belongs to the fountain. In that case, the construction date of the fountain in question must be 1801. During the translation of the marble inscription, Hebrew words were first read and transcribed in Latin letters. Next, the text was translated into Turkish. Finally, an English translation was made.

60 In dictionaries, “sebil” means “path” or “way”. The term of “sebil”, comes from “fî sebîli’llâh” (in the way of Allah, for the sake of Allah). In the Ottoman Empire, at the beginninga water dispenser was called a “sebil” and the place where it was distributed from was called “sebilhane”(sebil-households). In time, the the “household” part of the word became disused and the word “sebil” took its current form. Nur Urfalioğlu, “Sebil”, TDV *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, accessed 11 August 2019, https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/sebil.

## ANNEX C- One of the pages of the Psalms in the Book of Psalms (Tehillim) found under plaster on the synagogue walls[61]

61 Photograph, Siren Bora Private Archive (SBPA).