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"IT'S VERY HARD TO BE A JEW, BUT IT'S EVEN HARDER BEING A JEWISH WOMAN..." JEWISH WOMEN IDENTITY WITHIN THE IZMIR COMMUNITY, ON THE EVE OF 'YOUNG TURK REVOLUTION' 1899-1908 *

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Abstract: The westernization and modernization of the Ottoman Empire that increased in intensity from the end of the 18th century onward had a profound impact on Ottoman Jewry. From the mid-19th century, the 'Alliance Israélite Universelle,' an organization aimed at providing Western-style education and fostering openness and progress in new cultures all over the Spanish world, began its activities among the Jewish communities in the Ottoman Empire. The Alliance established a network of modern schools, which played a fundamental role in the westernization and modernization processes of the local communities.

The origin of all these dramatic changes was during the Tanzimat period (1839-1876). The reorganization of Ottoman society through technical, administrative, and educational reforms backed and approved by the European powers enabled the changes within the Jewish communities as well.

The overthrow of Abdülhamid II's autocratic regime in 1908 by the 'Young Turks' started the second constitutional period (1908-1918). This period was witness to intensive social and ideological agitation, which, among other social processes, accelerated the growth of women's associations, opened universities to women, and

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incorporated women in the workforce. More importantly, discussions on women and family were produced by writers with Western, Islamic, and Turkish orientations. However, modernization was tested first and foremost in family relationships.

This was the beginning of a multi-level cultural transformation for the Jewish communities all over the empire. This transformation was similar to the "Enlightenment movement" within the European Jewish communities because it transformed the traditional cultural patterns and opened the formerly closed communities to new ideologies and experiences. Importantly, this transformation manifested itself, among other areas, in women's emancipation.

It appears that progress and modernization were more profound in Izmir (Smyrna) than in other regions. More specifically, during the 19th century, Izmir became an important metropolis, as well as one of the most renowned cultural and commercial centers, not only in the Ottoman Empire, but in the entire world.

The flourishing of Izmir in cultural and financial spheres attracted many Jews, as well as other minorities such as Armenians, Greeks, and, of course, Turks.

Therefore, Izmir was chosen to be a case study for the rest of the communities in the Ottoman Empire.

In contrast to the other surrounding communities, the role Sephardic-Jewish women played in the process of women's emancipation had no national motive. They did not take part in the forming of the national identity, as feminism was perceived in Mediterranean countries in the 19th century and onward. The women's emancipation of the Izmir community was reflected culturally only and only amongst the elite of Jewish society. This study examines the cultural process that the Jewish women underwent from the end of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th in Izmir, as well as the rabbis' response to this process.

The study's main source is based on the press in Ladino in Izmir, the leading city of journal publication (in Ladino) in the Ottoman Empire. The focus is on *El Komersial* [The Commercial] newspaper, which was the journal of the cultural elite of Izmir and in which progressive notions gained maximum expression.

Keywords: Izmir, Jewish Community, Women Emancipation, Culture.

"YAHUDİ OLMAK ÇOK ZOR, AMA YAHUDİ KADIN OLMAK DAHA DA ZOR..." 1899-1908 'JÖN TÜRK DEVRİMİ'NİN ÖNCESİNDE İZMİR TOPLUMU İÇİNDEKİ YAHUDİ KADIN KİMLİĞİ

Öz: 18. yüzyılın sonlarından itibaren yoğunluğu artan Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Batılılaşması ve modernleşmesi Osmanlı Yahudilerini derinden etkilemiştir. 19. yüzyılın ortalarından itibaren, Batı tarzı eğitim sağlamayı ve İspanyol dünyasının her yerinde yeni kültürlerde açıklık ve ilerlemeyi teşvik etmeyi amaçlayan kuruluş olan 'Alliance Israélite Universelle', Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'ndaki Yahudi toplulukları arasında eylemlerine başladı. İttifak, yerel toplulukların Batılılaşma ve modernleşme süreçlerinde temel bir rol oynayan bir modern okullar ağı kurdu.

Tüm bu dramatik değişikliklerin kökeni Tanzimat döneminde (1839-1876) olmuştur. Avrupalı güçler tarafından desteklenen ve onaylanan teknik, idari ve eğitim reformları yoluyla Osmanlı toplumunun yeniden düzenlenmesi, Yahudi cemaatlerinde de değişikliklere olanak sağladı.

1908'de II. Abdülhamid'in otokratik rejiminin 'Jön Türkler' tarafından devrilmesi, ikinci meşrutiyet dönemini (1908-1918) başlattı. Bu dönem, diğer toplumsal süreçlerin yanı sıra kadın derneklerinin büyümesini hızlandıran, kadınlara üniversiteler açan ve kadınları işgücüne dahil eden yoğun bir toplumsal ve ideolojik uyarılmaya tanık oldu. Daha da önemlisi, kadın ve aile üzerine tartışmalar Batılı, İslami ve Türk yönelimli yazarlar tarafından üretildi. Ancak modernleşme her şeyden önce aile ilişkilerinde denendi.

Bu, imparatorluğun her yerindeki Yahudi toplulukları için çok düzeyli bir kültürel dönüşümün başlangıcıydı. Bu dönüşüm, geleneksel kültürel kalıpları dönüştürdüğü ve daha önce kapalı olan toplulukları yeni ideolojilere ve deneyimlere açtığı için Avrupa Yahudi topluluklarındaki "Aydınlanma hareketi"ne benziyordu. Daha da önemlisi bu dönüşüm diğer alanların yanı sıra kadınların kurtuluşunda kendini gösterdi.

İzmir'de (Smirni) ilerleme ve modernleşmenin diğer bölgelere göre daha derin olduğu görülmektedir. Daha özel olarak, 19. yüzyılda İzmir, sadece Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun değil, tüm dünyanın en önemli kültür ve ticaret merkezlerinden biri olmasının yanı sıra önemli bir metropol haline geldi.

İzmir'in kültürel ve finansal alanlardaki gelişimi, birçok Yahudi'nin yanı sıra Ermeniler, Rumlar ve tabii ki Türkler gibi diğer azınlıkları da kendisine çekti.

Bu nedenle İzmir, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'ndaki diğer topluluklar için bir örnek olay incelemesi olarak seçilmiştir.

Çevredeki diğer toplulukların tersine, Sefarad-Yahudi kadınların kurtuluşu / özgürleşmesi sürecinde oynadıkları rolün ulusal bir nedeni yoktu. Feminizm 19. yüzyıl ve sonrasında Akdeniz ülkelerinde algılanırken onlar ulusal kimliğin oluşumunda yer almadılar. İzmir cemaatinin kadınların özgürleşmesi, kültürel olarak yalnızca ve yalnızca Yahudi toplumunun seçkinleri arasında yansıtıldı. Bu çalışma, 19. yüzyılın sonundan 20. yüzyılın başına kadar İzmir'de Yahudi kadınların geçirdiği kültürel süreci ve hahamların bu sürece tepkisini incelemektedir.

Çalışmanın ana kaynağı, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun önde gelen dergi yayıncılığı (Ladino) kenti olan İzmir'deki Ladino'daki basına dayanmaktadır. Odak noktası, İzmir'in kültürel seçkinlerinin dergisi olan ve ilerici fikirlerin maksimum düzeyde ifade kazandığı *El Komersial* [Ticari] gazetesidir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İzmir, Yahudi Topluluğu, Kadının Kurtuluşu, Kültür.

Introduction

We can discover how men saw women by quoting some folk sayings taken from the Jewish- Sephardic society:

"Ni noviya sin velo, ni mujer sin selo" [there's no bride without a veil and no woman without envy],¹ "La mujer l el vino kitan al ombre del tino" [a woman and wine drive a man crazy], or "Del la mujer l del vizinio nada no keda guardrado" [you can't hide anything from the neighbor or the woman]. and also, "La mujer l la gaina por mucho andar son pedridas" [woman and chicken: both get lost from so much wandering].²

The westernization and modernization of the Ottoman Empire that increased in intensity from the end of the 18th century onward had a profound impact on Ottoman Jewry. From the mid-19th century, the 'Alliance Israélite Universelle,' an organization aimed at providing Western-style education and fostering openness to progress and new cultures all over the Spanish world, began its activities among the Jewish communities in the Ottoman Empire. The Alliance established a network of modern schools, which played a fundamental role in the westernization and modernization processes of the local communities.

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¹ Issac Moscona *Pniney Sfarad* [the Wisdom of Spain] (Tel Aviv: Maariv Press, 1981), 156

² Moscona, *Pniney Sfarad*, 57, 122.

Western, Islamic, and Turkish orientations.³ However, modernization was tested first and foremost in family relationships.⁴

The First Signs of Feminism in the Community of Izmir

This was the beginning of a multi-level cultural transformation for the Jewish communities all over the empire. This transformation was similar to the “enlightenment movement” within the European Jewish communities because it transformed the traditional cultural patterns and opened the formerly closed communities to new ideologies and experiences. This transformation manifested itself, among other areas, in feminism.

It appears that progress and modernization were more profound in Izmir than in other regions. More precisely, during the 19th century, Izmir became an important metropolis, as well as one of the most renowned cultural and commercial centers, not only in the Ottoman Empire, but also in the entire world.⁵

Izmir’s flourishing in the cultural and financial spheres attracted many Jews, as well as other minorities such as Armenians, Greeks, and, of course, Turks.

Therefore, we chose Izmir to be a case study for the rest of the communities in the Ottoman Empire.

In contrast to the other surrounding communities, the role Sephardic-Jewish women played in the process of feminism had no national motive. They did not take part in the forming of the national identity, as feminism was perceived in Mediterranean countries in the 19th century and on. ‘Jewish’ feminism was perceived as ‘cultural’ feminism only.

Despite the differences, there are parallel lines between the struggle of Jewish women and that of the women in the surrounding communities in the context of nationalism, especially in perceiving the woman as an educator, because in these two groups the woman was perceived as a ‘mother-educator.’ This means someone who is cultured and supposed to break the vicious circle of the East’s corrupt principles, which resulted in degenerative communities was passed on transgenerationally. As a result, the reason for

³ Mervat F. Hatem, “Modernization, the State, and the Family in Middle East Women’s Studies” in *The Social History of the Modern Middle East*, ed. M. L. Meriwether and J. E. Tucker (Colorado: Westview Press, 1999), 68-69

⁴ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁵ Daniel Goffman, “Izmir: From Village to Colonial Port City” in *The Ottoman City Between East and West- Aleppo, Izmir and Istanbul* Edhem Eldem, ed. Daniel Goffman and Bruce Masters (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 128.

educating women was in the end to make them "good mothers" for the benefit of the nation.⁶

The event that pushed or even began the 'cultural' feminism of the Jewish community, was opening schools for girls.

In 1878, the 'Alliance' founded the first girls' school in Izmir. In 1884, the school opened a professional workshop and 35 students were educated in this framework so that they could find themselves a profession. In 1900, the school had 300 students. In 1895, there were two girls' schools in Izmir with 500 students.⁷

This idea of providing modern education as part of a new cultural process is well expressed in *El Komersial*. It was the journal of the cultural elite of Izmir in which progressive notions were given maximum expression.

The following is an article titled ['Respektamos la mujer'] 'Respecting the Woman.' The article was written by someone who adopted the pseudonym of ['La Feminista'] 'The Feminist.. *El Komersial* was one of the Ladino journals that allocated considerable space to expressing feminist ideas, probably because it was a newspaper of the elite that already supported ideas regarding women's status.

[Translation: The woman guards the family's future and the next generations.' What is the woman's function? Is it not a noble and holy mission to well raise the family? Is not the future of humanity in her hands?... She is the one who needs to educate the children well, she is the one who needs to make them loyal, humane citizens, men in the full meaning of the word... we made sure that the woman, once she has become a mother, will have the attributes and understandings needed for the task she is destined to fulfill...].⁸

⁶ Aaron Rodrigue, Hinuch, Hevra v'Historia- 'Kol Israel Haverim' v'Yehudey Agan haYam haTichon 1820-1929 [Education, Society and History- "Alliance Israélite Universelle" and Mediterranean Jewry 1860-1929] (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 1991), 88

⁷ Gizel. E. Hazan, Aaron de Yosef Hazan-Izmir, 1600-2000 (Izmir, 2000), 81

⁸ Mujer ke defendes el avenir de la familia, de las jenerciones a venir! Kual es el rolo de la mujer?...no es la mujer ke persegue la noble l santa mision de bien elevar la familia? No es entre sus manos ke konfian el avenir de la umnidad?...es eya ke tiene por mandando de preparar nobles sivdadinos, umanos, ombres en el bivo senso de la palavra...es eya ke se enkaraga de inkulkar a los chikos...las ideas sansas, los prensiones de la buena edukasion...l de las nobles kualidades. Ke rolo mas importante de este? Ke mas noble mision ke akea la mujer?...okupimos nos donke de preparar nuestras ijas en este senso...lavorimos de manera a ke la mujer, apenas divinda madre, posie las kualidades l konosensias nesesityas a la mision ke eya es destinida a inchir...

El Komersial, 4=14, 10=10, 22 April 1907.

These words, as aforementioned, coming from a man, express feminist ideas in their first stages. The woman needs to free herself from her former status and she needs to be educated as part of the process of cultural feminism described earlier, but her task in its basis is the same - to be a good mother and a successful wife. Her mission would be more successfully fulfilled if only she would receive modern education.

It stems from this that even if the Jewish-Turkish male society accepts the attitude that women should be better educated, the basis for this attitude is the interest of the husband and children.

However, whatever the purpose of providing modern education was, education is what brought Jewish women out of their houses and into the working environment. With the establishment of 'Alliance' throughout the Empire, excelling students were sent to a teacher's seminary in Paris, with the expectation of returning to their native countries as teachers. From 1872, women were also included in this teaching force.⁹ Although it was difficult to send girls from the Eastern countries and the Ottoman Empire to Paris alone, many parents agreed to it, knowing that a teacher's position would secure economic welfare and even prestige for their daughter.

In this period, teaching was the only position that led Jewish women to an independent life.¹⁰ These women were new roles model among the Jewish women in the empire: modern women, who had attained education, had learned new languages, and had lived in Paris, the city of progress and culture. These women could more easily present themselves as equal to men in the Jewish community. Despite this, however, during their four years of studies in the teacher's seminary in Paris, the Sephardic and Eastern girls felt inferior to the boys.

The inferiority of the girls was twofold: first, they suffered for being 'Eastern' and they had the 'honor' of being called names on account of their origin and culture. Second, the boys' learning conditions were much better than the girls,' not only in the curriculum, its content, and the number of weekly teaching hours, but also in their aims. Although religious teaching was supposed to be the same for boys and girls, Hebrew required from the girls was simple, restricted to prayers, and at a maximum level of two hours weekly, whereas the boys had ten hours a week. The boys received ten to twelve hours a week of French, while the girls received only eight hours a week. Moreover, besides sewing lessons, which were taught for seven to ten hours a week, the girls did

⁹ Frances Malino, "Teachers of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, 1872-1940" in *Jewish Women in Historical Perspective* Jewish Women in Historical Perspective, 2nd ed., ed. J. R. Baskin (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998), 250

¹⁰ Malino, *Teachers of the Alliance*, 250.

not study any subject for more than five hours a week.¹¹ In any case, the fact that girls took part in the Alliance's teaching force is probably the first experience in the Jewish history of Sephardic Jewry to cause a real and active change in women's status, by women themselves, already in the latter third of the 19th century.

Another shared issue between the two groups of women, the Jewish and non-Jewish, is women's contribution to journalism. We did not find a women's only newspaper in the Izmir community, one which was written by women and only for women; however, the women of Izmir did take an active part in journalism written for the general public. For example, we found a writer named Lucie, who brought to print common proverbs regarding women, which were in use in the society in which she lived. She cited as an example the sentence, 'kien mujer tiene- pelea tiene' [whoever has a woman - has a fight]. Even the participation of women in journalistic writing showed only some progress.

A very interesting phenomenon can be found in the Izmir community. The same community in which the religious influence was stronger than in any other community across the Empire exhibited very progressive feminist ideas. They were expressed not only by the women, but also by the men. Journalism was where those subversive ideas were mostly expressed.

In an article signed, again, by the writer 'The Feminist,' we find the following:

[Translation: Our good condition is dependent on the woman... as such, we should make her task easier at any price...].¹²

The writer later identifies with women and notes:

[Translation:...she must be equipped with appropriate weapons, and to give her education so she could certainly complete the educational task that society gave her...].¹³

¹¹ Malino, Teachers of the Alliance, 257-8.

¹² En nuestra epoka, atan una muy grande importansia a la mujer...si enteresan a eya kon mas ardor, kon una mas grante voluntad. Porke? La repuesta no es tanto defisil a dar: de la mujer defenden nuestro bien estar, nuestra ventura, I komo tal kale a todo presio fasilitarle su mision...

El Komersial, 7=18, 20 June 1907

¹³ la tarea de la mujer no es kuantto fasil ke pueden kreerlo; eya es dura I penivle; sus doveres son multiples, nomerosos, su responsabilidad enorme, su karga pesgada, I para bien akumplir tantas ovras eya es ovligada de armarse de lo ministrozo, I de primonerse del bagaje de enstruksion I edukasion ke la premeta de enchir kon seguridad el rolo edukador ke la sociedad le asenio. Aki, ven sin pena la parte aktiva ke deven tomar los jentores en la elevasion de las ijas de estas madres foturas; elevarla dezde la tierna edad en los prinipios nobles...de la epoka

These utterances, especially as they came from the man, proved that the world feminist movement affected the Jewish society in Izmir. It is interesting to note that this writer declares elsewhere that: "the woman cannot do her job properly without change from men".¹⁴

In another article, which deals with letting girls participate in the theater, we discovered more radical feminism than the one we met up to now just before that. All those groups had to struggle with various obstacles, the harshest of which were the rabbinical and religious institutions, as will be proven later on.

The female actors faced additional obstacles because their mere presence on stage outraged the orthodox citizens. Even after the Jewish communities had become less traditional and plays would even take place during the Sabbath, the female actors' names would still be mentioned in the program by their initials only.

Furthermore, some authors pushed for a more intensive collaboration of women in theatre:

"Why won't fathers permit their daughters to take part in a play benefiting the needy? Another issue that must be considered – the relationship that the girls must create with the boys. It is only natural that one can't put on a show just like that, without any rehearsal, and therefore it is a necessity for the girls to come in some contact with the male actors...we cannot fathom a girl speaking or being in the same room with a boy for a long while...we always blame the girls while we can't think of anything to say to the boy. It is very odd, but this fact originates from ancient, better times we insist on preserving. We believe the girls' honor can survive only when she does not see or speak to boys...and that is also why a marriage of love is quite rare in our city...why is that? because the couple is not given an opportunity to get to know one another and bond. They are connected by a long line of engagement which they would rather bear than rise against. It is time we allow our daughters more freedom. By trusting they remain respectable, we have given them the need to create changes in their lives, and I am certain that they will know how to keep

aktual...kon la fundasion de las eskolas, la karga de los jentores se topo dela sorte minguada. Onde estan ansi akeos tiempos onde....se engrandesean sin kultura I sin edukasion? Estos dias eskuros desparesieron...

El Komersial, 7=18, 20 June 1907

¹⁴ *El Komersial*, 7=18, 20 June 1907

their virtue. Objectively, I feel I should add that it is time we understood that a female actor is nothing to be shocked of...the Christians and the Greeks allow their girls to appear on stage, and so should we. Not because they do it, but because it is noble and absolutely not demeaning."¹⁵

The writer calls upon the readers not to look at the actresses performing in the play as 'cheap.' On the contrary, he claims that theater, a relatively new phenomenon in the Jewish community, was a cultural institution and that more girls should perform in the theater even if it would mean not keeping strict physical distance between boys and girls. The writer states that the moral-religious inhibitions are a primitive issue, and that today it is acceptable for women to take part in plays just as men do. Not only does this columnist call for dismantling the boundaries between boys and girls and for a gender-equal society, he also denigrates what was, until then, an unbreakable rule. Moreover, as if that were not enough, he also indirectly preaches in favor of adopting the new social order prevalent in the modern world and in direct contradiction to Orthodox Jewish traditions.

Not keeping distance between men and women was still not common in the Jewish community.

If folk sayings represent the views of the general public, its world and social point of view, then the feminism emanating from the folk sayings common in the Jewish-Sephardic community in the Ottoman Empire, seems a bit different. From a variety of folk sayings taken from the day-to-day life of the Jewish-Sephardic family, we can learn what men thought of women. The proverbs I quoted in the beginning reveal a negative attitude toward women.

In contrast, there are folk sayings which praise the woman, for example: "todo depende de la mujer" [everything depends on the woman]¹⁶ or "El ke a la mujer siente, nunca se arrepiente" [He who listens to his wife's advice, will never regret it]. Furthermore, "La mujer buena tiene su reynado detras de la puerta" [a good woman - beyond her door, in the sense of "A Woman's Beauty is Inward"], "Mujer sin criatura es arvole sin fruto" [a woman without children - like a fruitless tree],¹⁷ and "Madre yugoza kita ijas nikocheras" [A diligent mother nurtures daughters to be housewives].¹⁸

¹⁵ El Komersial, 2 Mayo 1907, pp. 3,4=11 (Ladino)

¹⁶ Aryeh Alkalai, Imrot u'Fitgamim Shel Yehudei Sfarad [Sayings and proverbs of the Jews of Spain] (Jerusalem: Vaad Adat haSfaradim Press, 1984), 180.

¹⁷ Moscona, Pniney Sfarad, 73, 120, 150.

¹⁸ Alkalai, Imrot u'Fitgamim, 188.

The first group of folk sayings helps perpetuate a woman's stigma, according to which a woman babbles, is curious, envious, and narrow-minded. In contrast, the second group praises women, but even here women are positive only in the familial context. More precisely, if she is diligent and raises the next generation of housewives, if she stays inside her house or raises children, then she wins lauds and praise. When she 'dares' exceed her domestic boundaries, she is considered a 'dangerous' woman who does not fulfill her primal destiny to fulfill her husband's wishes and watch over the house.

Part of the sages of the period saw women in precisely this way. In the book of laws and sermons by Rabbi Yosef Palacci (1815-1835), the son of the famous Ottoman Rabbi, Haim Palacci, "Joseph and his brothers," the negative stigma of women receives another expression. In his interpretation of "Woman of Valor" from the Book of Proverbs, he writes:

[Translation]... after he praised her deeds and her way of speaking that is not like other chattering women who speak of non-important things, but her mouth she opened in wisdom and Torah which are the laws relating to women.¹⁹

From here we learn that usually a woman blabbers and deals with nonsensical matters, and only a woman defined as a "woman of valor" is unique because she speaks words of holiness and charity.

Rabbi Abraham Palacci, as well, while interpreting the deed of Jael and her murder of Sisera, notes that a woman is fit only if she fulfills her husband's wishes: "There is no fit woman, but a woman who fulfills her husband's wishes..."²⁰

In an attempt to settle the contradiction, according to which the woman in Izmir was treated with a positive, progressive, and even a feminist attitude, while she was stuck with uncomplimentary labels, it could be said that feministic ideas existed in the Izmir community, as they were expressed mostly through journalism. However, these ideas, at least in the chronological aspect of this article, were the purview of the upper middle class and less the purview of the lower middle class, which were also traditional.

The writer who called himself "The Feminist" notes that he takes examples from the surrounding community, but that Jewish feminism is not general feminism; a meaningful difference stems from the struggle of the two groups of

¹⁹ Joseph Palacci. Yoseph et Echav [Joseph and his Brothers] (Izmir, 1896), 4th unit, chapter 36, p. 36, side A.

²⁰ Abraham Palacci. Avraham Ezkor [I Will Remember Abraham] (Izmir, 1889), chapter 9, p. 89, side A.

women. The Jewish women did not mean to start a revolution against the Jewish perceptions in Izmir and other places, but wanted to stay within it.

For these purposes, they could have afforded themselves to enlist the principles of the general feminist movement and to improve their status with their help in the Jewish community.²¹

²¹ Samuel Rafael, "haTchiya - Maasaf Sifrut L'Nashim Ziyoniyot b'Saloniki," The Renaissance à Literary Compendium for Zionist Women in Salonica, Pe'amim, vol. 82 (2000): 92

Conclusion

To summarize, Jewish feminism in Izmir was expressed in several fields:

First, this was not national feminism as was conventional in the surrounding non-Jewish communities, or any other type of feminism, except cultural feminism alone, that is, women's entrance to schools and later their work as teachers, at least in the years that are the focus of this article. The Jewish women of Izmir took an active part in charity organizations, but not, as far as we know, in political organizations during those years. Second, feminism was expressed by freedom of speech regarding "womanly" topics or in declarations praising women and their right to modern education, especially in newspapers. In this context, we showed that men also cooperated and supported women's education, even if it was only to enable them to be better mothers and educators. The rabbinical establishment, however, continued with the traditional approach according to which a woman's place is at home.

Despite some similarities as we mentioned above, it seems that Jewish feminism was not an established, directed process as it was in the surrounding communities. Jewish feminism adopted more than one idea of progress and called for equal modern education for women but ended at the same point from which it started. More radical voices, which called for equality, were few and solitary, and it is hard to claim if they were compatible with the mentality of different segments of the Jewish population. It is also difficult to argue that feministic ideas reached the various strata in the Jewish population, and even if they did, they were not integrated into the lower middle class, the same class that was mostly traditional.

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