

Hahambaşılık (080389)

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Osmanlı Devlet Salnamelerinde Hahambaşılık (1847-1918)

**MADDE YAYIMLANDIKTAN
SONRA GELEN DOKÜMAN**

Canan SEYFELİ*

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Özet: Makalenin konusu Hahambaşılığın 1847-1918 yılları arasındaki durumlarıyla ilgilidir. Kaynağı bu tarihler arasında 68 sayı yayımlanmış olan Osmanlı Devlet Salnameleridir. Amacı Osmanlı resmi yayın organlarında Hahambaşılığa bakışı ortaya koymaktır. Ayrıca Yahudilerin ayrı bir millet olarak kabul edilmelerinin resmi belgelerden hareketle anlaşılmasını kolaylaştırmaktır. Sonuç olarak Hahambaşılık ayrı bir millet olarak salnamelerde gayrimüslimlere yer verilen ilk sayıdan son sayıya kadar hepsinde kaydedilmiştir. Bunun yanında Osmanlı devletinde hahambaşılığın konumu, hahambaşının kaymakam olarak kabul edilmesi gibi, salnamelede de yansımıştır. Osmanlı Yahudileri ayrı bir millet olarak kabul edilip "feth öncesi yapının korunması" ilkesine göre idare edilmiştir. Fetihden önce Yahudiler, farklı cemaatlere ayrılmışlardı ve hepsinin bir baş hahamı vardı. İstanbul'un fethi sonrasında Bizans dönemindeki Romaniyot hahambaşının görevini sürdürmesine izin verilirken bütün Yahudiler üzerinde sorumlu addedilmiştir. Ancak 1492 ve devamında cemaatlerin fazlalaşmasıyla her cemaat kendi hahamının Osmanlıya karşı sorumlu başhaham olmasını istemiştir. Bu olmayınca, hiç olmaması yönündeki isteklerini bildirerek hahambaşılık fermanının verilmemesine yol açmışlardır. Bu durum, yine kendi istekleriyle 1835'de hahambaşılık yeniden tesis edilene kadar böyle devam etmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Osmanlı, Yahudiler, Musevilik, Hahambaşılık, Osmanlı Devlet Salnameleri, Gayrimüslimler, Millet Sistemi.

* Yrd. Doç. Dr., Dicle Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dinler Tarihi Anabilim Dalı [cseyfeli@yahoo.com].

Haham Başı (Chief Rabbi)

aut-Avigdor Levy

Haham başı, also spelled *hahambaşı*, has been the title of a government-appointed chief rabbi in the Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey since 1835. The title, of Ottoman Turkish provenance, combines *haham*, the Turkish form of Hebrew *hakham* (wise man, sage), used by Sephardi Jews as a title for their rabbis, and Turkish *baş* (head, chief) in the qualifying relationship construct *başı*. The Hebrew counterpart of *haham başı* is *hakham bashi*.

The Christian communities in the Ottoman Empire were under the religious and civil leadership of their ecclesiastical heads, the patriarchs, who were officially appointed and confirmed by the government as sole representatives of their respective communities. The Jews, however, for most of their experience in the Ottoman Empire, fashioned their own unique leadership and administration. In general, the representation of the community before the Ottoman authorities was in the hands of lay leaders, usually wealthy business people familiar with the ways of government. In the seventeenth century and after, the religious leadership became more or less institutionalized and vested in the office of the local chief rabbinate, often a committee of two or three rabbis, each of whom was considered a chief rabbi in his own right and was known in Hebrew as *rav ha-kolel*, or rabbi of the entire community. The Ottoman authorities recognized the right of the local Jewish communities to organize their own autonomous leadership, but as a rule they did not interfere in the process and did not grant official recognition to individuals holding the office of chief rabbi. The Jewish communities, wishing to avoid government interference in their internal affairs, were apparently satisfied with this arrangement, and the authorities acquiesced in it as well.

This situation prevailed until the 1830s, when the Ottoman government began trying to implement far-reaching reforms that would transform and redefine the Ottoman polity on the basis of patriotism, pluralism, and equality before the law (see → Ottoman Empire, 1835–1923). To promote the principle and appear-

ance of a pluralistic Ottoman society, it became a matter of state interest to advance the political position of the Jewish community and grant it greater prominence. The first step in that direction was taken in 1835 with the granting of formal recognition to Ottoman Jewry as one of the four “official” communities (*millet*s) that together constituted the Ottoman body politic, the others being the Muslims, Greeks, and Armenians. This necessitated the conferral of formal recognition on a specific representative individual, and thus the office of *haham başı*, or chief rabbi, came into existence. In January 1835 it was ceremoniously conferred on Abraham Levi (or Ha-Levi; d. 1836) in the presence of the sultan and grand vizier. The chief rabbinate was to be equal, in principle, to the Orthodox and Armenian patriarchates, which meant that the *haham başı* was regarded as the civil and religious head of the Jewish community, as well as its official representative to the government. His appointment was given official sanction by the state through the granting of a document called a *berat*.

The new office was first introduced in Istanbul and was accepted by the Jewish community with considerable suspicion and reluctance as an intervention in its internal affairs. As a result, for almost thirty years, until 1864, there were, in fact, two separate chief rabbis in Istanbul. Jews continued to treat the *rav ha-kolel* as their religious and spiritual leader, and saw the office of *haham başı* as an external imposition, of significance only for ceremonial purposes and to represent the community on state occasions. In time, however, the office of *haham başı* increased in prestige and importance and was accepted by renowned scholars, such as Rabbi Jacob (Ya'akov) Avigdor (1860–1863) and Rabbi Yaqir Geron (Gueron; 1863–1872). Consequently, by 1864, the office of *hahambaşı* appears to have completely supplanted, in Istanbul, the older office of *rav ha-kolel*.

Shortly after the introduction of the office of *haham başı* in Istanbul, it was also instituted in the Jewish communities of Izmir, Salonica, and Bursa in September 1835; and in Edirne and Sofia in July 1836. Subsequently, *haham başı*s were appointed in Sarajevo (1840), Jerusalem (1841), Baghdad (1849), and Tripoli in North

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