

A DESERTED JEWISH CEMETERY OF AKHİSAR¹

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ABSTRACT: In the town of Akhisar, a Western Anatolian town, there lie some tombstones with inscriptions in Hebrew on them. It is clear that the place was once a Jewish cemetery. The place no longer looks like a cemetery for it is not only surrounded with buildings, but the land is ploughed for cultivation. Lately the cemetery had been taken into an enclosure and the tombstones have been aligned at certain intervals and the field has been patched with grass. The tombs can no longer be identified. There are twenty-six tombstones lying on the ground here and there. The number of tombstones is not enough so as to claim whether more than one person is buried in one tomb or to draw out family ties. In any case I observed that the field is big enough to encompass twenty-six tombstones. They all belong to the Ottoman period dating from 1884 to 1918. Today there is no longer a Jewish community in this town. The Jews in almost none of the Anatolian towns have been in majority and therefore it is difficult to say whether they ever had a lack of space for burial ground.

In this paper I will compare these Jewish tombstones at Akhisar with a number of Ottoman tombstones, particularly the ones in Western Anatolia. I will also try to establish through archival documents and some other sources the historical background to the Jewish community that once existed in this small town of Anatolia.

¹ I would like to thank the following for the help they have extended to me in writing this. Zülfiye Çakıroğlu, one of my undergraduate students from Middle East Technical University, provided the photographs in the academic year 1999-2000. Her effort to get the information regarding the Jews of Akhisar locally was unfortunately fruitless. I am also grateful to several other scholars who made the translation of the inscriptions for me at the time; Dr. Faruk Toprak of Ankara University, Dr. David Grossman of Bar-Ilan University and Tal Fishman of Middle East Technical University. The latter two are also credited for their valuable suggestions.

The tombstones and inscriptions on them provide insight into the life of deceased people. Almost all the gravestones bear the name and the age of the deceased and at times where they lived and family origins.² According to Klein-Franke “the common Hebrew words for cemetery are: *bet-qebarot*, the house of the burials, *bet-‘almin* or *bet-‘olam*, the everlasting house and *bet-ha-hayyim*, the house of the living.”³

Jews lived in almost every major city of the Ottoman Empire and left behind cemeteries (*bet-ha-hayyim*) that have survived to this day. This fact apparently is clear in Minna Rozen’s works. Minna Rozen is one of the renowned scholars who had undertaken a number of studies on the Jewish community and Jewish cemeteries in Ottoman Empire.⁴ Furthermore she was the one who directed the project conceived by Professor Bernard Lewis who was then the director of the Annenberg Research Institute, identified the Jewish cemeteries in Turkey dating from the Ottoman period, and had them identified, documented and photographed from 1987 to 1990. The same institute sponsored the project.⁵ The remnants of Jewish community and most probably including the tombstones of Akhisar cemetery, subject matter of this article, were also photographed at the time that is somewhere between 1987-1990.⁶

The majority of the Jewish communities of Turkey in time disappeared; most of them immigrated to Israel and also as a result of demographic shift some others moved from small towns to the big cities such as Istanbul and Izmir.⁷

² Klein-Franke, A. (2005): “Tombstones bearing Hebrew inscriptions in Aden” in *Arabian archeology epigraphy* 16: 161–182. pp. 161-182.

³ Klein-Franke (2005) p. 161.

⁴ Days of the Crescent: Chapters in the History of the Jews in the Ottoman Empire, edited by Minna Rozen, 412 pages, illustrations, bibliography. Tel Aviv: Department of the Study of the Jewry of Salonika and Greece, Institute of the Study of the Diaspora, Tel Aviv University, 1996-1997.

⁵ Rozen, M (1992): “A Survey of Jewish Cemeteries in Western Turkey” in *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, vol. 83, No. 1/2 (Jul. - Oct.), p. 71.

⁶ Rozen: (1992) p. 74.

⁷ Rozen: (1992) p. 72.

The Turks generally respected the cemeteries and had them preserved. Yet a number of Jewish cemeteries both in Turkey and some other countries were destroyed. For instance an ancient Jewish cemetery in the municipality of Salonika was destroyed and the Greek contractors sold its tombstones.⁸ Likewise in Edirne most of the ancient cemeteries disappeared and residential areas have been built over them. In Çanakkale an old cemetery still exists, but just as an abandoned field, like Akhisar Jewish cemetery was in 1999. The tombstones in the field are no longer legible. In Bergama the “Greek” quarter was built over an ancient cemetery and the traces of the latter no longer exists.⁹ Likewise there was a cemetery founded in the suburb of Montrouge of Paris, in 1786. Its owner, the Jewish Consistory of Paris, destroyed this cemetery and had a religious school built on the site.¹⁰ Fortunately quite a number of Jewish cemeteries in Turkey including Akhisar Jewish cemetery have survived to this day.

There is a group of Jewish tombstones in a field already sown in İnönü Quarter of Akhisar, a town in Western Anatolia. The tombstones were scattered here and there haphazardly most probably to open a field for cultivation. The place no doubt is a deserted Jewish cemetery. The cemetery lately has been taken into an enclosure and tombstones have been aligned at certain interval. The cemetery is at the southeast of the town and it is stuck between the İnönü quarter and Industrial workshops. The quarter as it is clear from its name was most probably founded long time after the foundation of Turkish Republic and named after İsmet İnönü, the second President of Turkey. The foundation of the quarter is perhaps after the adoption of Surname Code of Law on 29 June 1934.

It is a historical fact that the Jews quite often moved from one place to another. The cemetery could have survived intact if it was within an enclosure at the time of first burial. It is probable that

⁸ Rozen, M. (2005): “Jews and Greeks Remember Their Past: The Political Career of Tzevi Koretz (1933-43)” in *Jewish Social Studies*, New Series, Vol. 12, No. 1 (autumn), pp. 111-166.

⁹ Rozen (1992) p. 74.

¹⁰ Polonovski, M.(2010): “Jewish Graves in Europe: public commemoration or ritual space?” in *Museum International*, No. 245–246 (Vol. 62, No. 1–2) a UNESCO 2010 Published by UNESCO Publishing and Blackwell Publishing Ltd. p. 73.

the Jews buried in this cemetery were a small closed community living in ghetto near the town and had this cemetery outside their ghetto. According to all three divine religions the cemeteries should be located outside the settlements. The distance according to Jewish tradition is about fifty yards and if this is not possible then the cemetery should have enclosure with a high wall¹¹. My visit to Akhisar about 15 years ago sometime in 2001 turned out to be fruitful. The cemetery at the time was more than fifty yards away from the Ottoman boundaries of the town and next to the Reşad Bey, the Muslim Cemetery in the Quarter of Hacı İshak. The boundary of Hacı İshak, although a quarter that goes back to the sixteenth century, was most probably moved further down to the South and the İnönü Quarter was founded next to it. There is about thirty meters between the Muslim and the Jewish cemeteries. Buildings now surround both cemeteries¹². However,

¹¹ Lanqueur, H-P. (1996): "Cemeteries in Orient and Occident" in *Cimetières et Traditions Funéraires dans la Mondes Ispamique*, vol. II, Turkish Historical Society (TTK) Ankara, pp. 3-4.

¹² At the time my visit the Jewish tombstones were haphazardly scattered, a number of stones were over the others, and most probably the inscriptions on some of the stones were facing the earth and therefore were not possible for me to turn them over to take their photos. Now they are scattered in a regular order and in a row with certain intervals, and a wall has been built around them. On the entrance to the cemetery ["Akhisar Musevi Mezarlığı" (Akhisar Jewish Cemetery)] is written. A website has been designed for the cemetery and a number of tombstones have been posted. They are dated as Şivan 5674 (May-June 1914 – the tomstone of Yakov Navaro, died Friday?), 20 Tammuz 5666 (13 July 1906 – Ora?, the daughter of David Kuenka), 17 Av (no date, but cf. photo 10), 14 İyar 5678 (26 April 1918 – Lina, wife of Yakov Benjuya), 6 Şevat 5636 (1 February 1876 – David Hallelevi), 22 Tevet 5658 (16 January 1898 – Mrs... wife of Şelomo Benjuya), 21 Hişvan 567- (name is not clear), 14 Adar 5696 (8 March 1936 – Ester, wife of Şelomo Politi), 22 Av 5669 (9 August 1909 – Mordehey Gerner, son of David Gerner), 20 Nisan 5678 (2 April 1918 – Merkada Malka, widow wife of Isac Gabay), 23 Kislev 5672 (14 December 1911 – Noya, wife of Şelomo's son Samuel), 19 Tammuz 5658 (9 July 1898 – Luna Benjoya), 5668 (1907/8), 23 Şevat 5678 (5 February 1918 – Isac Nahum, aged 19), and posted with a summary translation (the name of the deceased and the date) done by Professor Nicholas de Lange of Cambridge University upon the initiative of Dr. İnci Türkoğlu. Apparently there is a synagogue in the center of Akhisar. Only the entrance of the synagogue has survived to this day. See

the Muslim cemetery is well preserved and is still in use particularly by those who have a plot reserved for them.

Unfortunately the sources on the Jewish cemetery in Akhisar are scant and the locals are not aware that the Jews ever lived in the town and even that there are remnants of Jewish cemetery. However, I was still able to collect some information. The Nüfus Memurluğu (The Registry of Births) does not have the Ottoman records. It is said that the Greeks destroyed them as they withdrew from the town during the Turkish War of Independence. However, I was informed that there are records of Jews who were registered during the 1926 registration by The Registry of Births whose officials called house by house and registered the inhabitants. Although there are no longer Jews in the town, the records of those over one hundred years of age still remain open. It is possible that some of these Jews migrated to Israel and some others to İzmir or Istanbul. The sources attest to this. The Office of Chief Rabbi in İzmir starting from the year 1909 kept records/registers of births and marriages. S. Bora who studied these registers worked out the number Jews who migrated to İzmir from other Ottoman cities and towns between the years 1909-1922. Apparently 50 Jews from Manisa and 6 from Akhisar migrated to İzmir.¹³

According to the sources and archaeological findings the Jewish settlements in İzmir and its vicinity go way back to 6th century B.C.¹⁴ However, İzmir, at the time of the Ottoman conquest in 1424, was not popular for settlements due to natural disasters such earthquakes, fires and infectious diseases. Therefore the Jews who took refuge in Ottoman Empire following their expulsion from Spain and Portugal at the end of fifteenth century instead they

<http://thyateirakazisi.com/akhisar-mezarliklari/> accessed on 24.10.2016.

¹³ Arslan. H. (2014): "Tarihsel Süreçte İzmir Yahudi Cemaatinin Sosyo-Kültürel ve Ekonomik Durumu" in *Milel ve Nihal - İnanç, Kültür ve Mitoloji Araştırmaları Dergisi* vol.11 nu. 1 (Ocak - Haziran), p. 127 (see the table on p. 128). Cf. Bora, S. (1995): *İzmir Yahudileri Tarihi (1908-1923)*, Gözlem Gazetecilik Basım ve Yayın A.Ş., İstanbul, p. 124.

¹⁴ Arslan (2014) p. 120. Cf. Tanyu, H. (1976): *Tarih Boyunca Türkler ve Yahudiler*, Yağmur Yay., İstanbul, 1/92-95.

settled in Manisa and Tire, the towns with better opportunities.¹⁵ However, how far the history of the Jews in Akhisar and for that matter in Manisa based on Ottoman source goes back is not certain. Yet according to a postscript in the Court Registers of Manisa dated Şevval 967 (June 1560)¹⁶ a Jewish house bought in 1503 might indicate that the earliest Jewish settlement in Manisa was around 1500 A.D. and the number of Jews settled in Manisa thereafter increased steadily. There are no records of Jews in the Sixteenth Century Ottoman Cadastral Registers of Akhisar. However there were about 80 to 150 households in Manisa, the main town of the Province. Apparently in 1530-31 there were eighty-eight Western Sephardim Jewish households and 33 *mücerreds* (bachelors) (from Spain) in Manisa¹⁷. The number of Jewish household in Manisa must have increased in the sixteenth century for according to 1575 Cadastral Register there were 156 Jewish households and 10 *mücerreds*¹⁸ in the city of Manisa. However, according to the same register there were seventeen quarters in Akhisar yet no Jews at all. According to the nineteenth century Ottoman *salnames* (yearbooks)¹⁹ the number of Jews in Manisa including Turgutlu varied from 1.344 to 1.644. Yet V. Cuinet estimates that around 1.000 Jews were living in Manisa at the time.²⁰ It is possible that sometime in the nineteenth century a number of these Jews moved from Manisa to Akhisar²¹. However,

¹⁵ Arslan (2014) p. 121; Emecen. F. (1989): *XVI. Asırda Manisa Kazası*, TTK Basımevi, Ankara, pp. 53, 62-67; Emecen, F. (1997): *Unutulmuş Bir Cemaat: Manisa Yahudileri*, İstanbul, Eren Yay., p. 30.

¹⁶ Manisa Şer'iyeye Sicilleri (MŞS), nu. VII, pp. 118-119. Cf. Emecen (1997): p. 30.

¹⁷ See 1575-76 Vakıf Register of Saruhan (Ankara Tapu Kadastro Genel Müdürlüğü, TD 544 - Defter-i Evkaf-ı Liva-i Saruhan), p. 20. Cf. Emecen (1997) pp. 29, 32-33.

¹⁸ The word *mücerred* is an Ottoman term meaning a non-married adult male subject to taxation.

¹⁹ *Salnames* are official yearbooks published by the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century. They covered history, biographical work and annual events of a province they were prepared for.

²⁰ Cuinet, V. (1982): *La Turquie d'Asie*, Paris, III, p. 536. Cf. Emecen (1997) p. 41.

²¹ TTK TD 115, Saruhan Mufassal Defteri/Register in the Library of Turkish Historical Society (F/0373 photocopy. The original is in Tapu Kadastro Genel Müdürlüğü Archives in Ankara), fol. 148b-154a.

the name one of the deceased being Hayim Hazzan (see the tombstone number 6) and the use of the term “jiftlik” may either suggest that some of the Jews of Akhisar were Ashkenazi Jews who had migrated from Eastern Europe including Russia and lived as a closed community in Akhisar or Hayim Hazan was a member of the staff of Akhisar ‘Or Yehuda’ Agriculture School. The cemetery in fact was also the burial ground for the staff of ‘Or Yehuda’ Agriculture School²².

According to the oral information given to me during my visit to the town there was once a closed community in Akhisar. Indeed in 19th century “*L’Alliance Israelite Universelle*” and “*Jewish Colonization Association*” was founded in Europe to help the Jews in other countries and in Ottoman Empire to establish agriculture schools²³. The first one was built in Thessalonica followed by a number of other agriculture schools including one in Akhisar called Akhisar ‘Or Yehuda’ Agriculture School located in Atatürk Quarter of Kayalıoğlu district at a distance of 7 km on Akhisar-Manisa highway. The School in the last quarter of 19th century was started to be built on the purchased Çakıroğlu Farm²⁴ and was completed in 1905 to train and educate agriculturalists for the region²⁵. The School built on a farm/çiflik was therefore simply called as Jiftlik or Yehuda as it is clear from the inscription on the tombstone number 11. Rabbi Moïse Franco, the author of *Essai sur l’histoire des Israélites de l’Empire ottoman depuis les origines jusqu’à nos jours* (Paris: A. Durlacher, 1897) was most probably the first schoolmaster of the School before its completion and the rabbi of Akhisar (Thyatira) Jewish community.²⁶ The school in 1925 was sold to Ahmet

²² Aktürk, E. (2012): *Osmanlı Döneminde Anadolu ve Trakya Topraklarında Yahudi Cemaati Tarafından Kurulan Tarım Okulları ve Akhisar Or Yehuda Tarım Okulu Örneğinin Mimari İncelemesi*, Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, İstanbul, MA thesis, p. 35.

²³ Franco, M. (1987): *Essai sur l’histoire des Israélites de l’Empire ottoman depuis les origines jusqu’à nos jours*, Paris: Librairie A. Durlacher, pp. 249, 252-253.

²⁴ Although never asked it is possible the farm belonged to the family of my student Züfiye Çakıroğlu.

²⁵ Erdemir, H. (2009): *Manisa Yahudileri ve Dünyaya Açılmalarına Giriş*, Manisa: Celal Bayar University publication, p. 138.

²⁶ Behar, M. & Zvi Ben-Dor Benite (2012): *Modern Middle Eastern Jewish Thought: Writings on Identity, Identity, Politics and Culture*

Kayali who in 1944 donated the building to the Turkish Government to be used as Kayalıoğlu Elementary School. The elementary school moved to another building in 1995 and upon Kayalıoğlu Municipality's application İzmir 2nd Cultural and Natural Heritage Preservation Board considered the Akhisar 'Or Yehuda' Agriculture School as a cultural asset on 06.06.2000.²⁷ Apparently the Jewish Community of İzmir kept in contact with their heritages in Akhisar, but surprisingly neglected the cemetery.

There are no records of the Jews for Akhisar in the Court Registers²⁸. However, there are three Ottoman documents on the population of Saruhan (Manisa) province in the BOA. The years in which these censuses were carried out are close to our period and include the population of both Muslims and non-Muslims in the province of Saruhan (Manisa). One would have expected that these censuses should have included the Jews of Akhisar. A close study of the document number 5 dated 1253-54 (1837-38), the census register of the non-Muslims, does not include Akhisar and there is no clear reference to the Jews. Likewise the document 655 dated 1258 (1842) includes Greeks and Armenians (*millet-i Rum and Ermeniyen*), but not Jews. The documents are recorded in the catalogue as follows:

(1893-1958), Brandeis University Press, Wlthem- Massachutes, p. 5, f.n. 3.

²⁷ Aktürk E. & Aktürk, B (2014): "Structural and Material Analysis of Old Jewish School Buildings and Developing Conservation Recommendations: A Case Study on Akhisar Or Yehuda Agriculture School," *International Civil Engineering & Architecture Symposium for Academicians (ICESA 2014)*, pp. 2-3. (www.academia.edu). For a detailed study of the school see Aktürk (2012) p. 49.

²⁸ There are also no records of Jews for Akhisar in Emecen (1989). Also Yuzo Nagata, who had studied Manisa Court registers, personally told me that he had not come across any records regarding the Jews of Akhisar in the Court Registers of Manisa.

MALİYE NEZARETİ-CERİDE

Number	Date	Details
5	1253-54	The census register of the non-Muslim subjects in the towns of the province of Saruhan (2 pages)
239	1254-55	The census register of the local and non-local subjects in the towns of the province of Saruhan (2 pages)
655	1258-....	The census register of the Muslims and (other) subjects in the towns of the province of Saruhan (8 pages)

The dates of the Jewish tombstones vary from 1884 (1876) to 1918. The Greeks occupied the town a year later in June 1919. The Turks forced the Greeks out on the 6th of September 1922, about three years later. The records of the Registry of Births show that the Jews survived the Greek occupation. However, it is probable that neither the Muslims nor the Jews had the luxury of putting engraved stones on the graves of their dead under the occupation. The year the cemetery was deserted and left to destruction perhaps would remain a mystery. In this deserted cemetery there are more than forty tombstones, but only twenty-five have inscription on them. However, according to Akın Tütüncü,²⁹ who claims that the Jews lived in Akhisar from the year 1500 to the year 1965, there were 32 tombstones in this

²⁹ I am grateful to my student Zülfiye Çakıroğlu who traced and sent me some extracts from an unpublished version of Akın Tütüncü's report/article with photographs entitled 'Akhisar During the Late Ottoman and Early Turkish Republic'. A slightly different information derived from of the report/article can be accessed on (11 September 2016) the websites 1: <http://www.sephardicstudies.org/akhisar.html> and 2: <http://gok-mavi.blogspot.com.au/2010/01/jewish-settlement-in-akhisar.html> : Tütüncü included the photographs of six tombstones in his article. He also translated the inscriptions on these tombstones into English. For the translation of the two of these tombstones see the Appendix.

Akhisar Jewish Cemetery. Tütüncü in his article also states that the treasure hunters dug the Jewish graves both manually and by bulldozers. According to Tütüncü the ‘area was taken from the public treasury and was turned into private property’. However a visit to the Akhisar Website will clearly show that the cemetery now is taken into an enclosure by the Municipality to be protected from the vandalism. According to Tütüncü the cemetery originally was 4,230 square meters, but at the time I visited the town in 2001 it was in two separate pieces of plot with a total of only 673 square meters with a road passing through the land (see the map and photo at the end of the article).

All the inscriptions on the tombstones in this cemetery are in Hebrew except one of them has inscription in Greek on the side, an indication of Greek connection. This particular tombstone is at a distance of few meters from the boundaries of where the tombstones found scattered. Also one of the tombstones has the Star of David at the top with the word “B-HAGOZER (cutter=judge)” inside (see the tombstone number 12).

These Jewish tombstones, although cut off the same type of stone, are not as refined as those found in the Muslim Cemetery. They are simply cut in rectangle and only the surface with inscription is polished. The Muslim tombstones in Reşad Bey Cemetery whereas are finely cut and shaped according to gender.

In comparing the contents of the inscriptions, I found that there is great resemblance to the contents of the inscriptions on the Ottoman tombstones. It is unfortunate that we do not have enough tombstones in this Jewish Cemetery as to work out whether more than one is buried in one grave and to work out the family connections. Whereas a group of tombstones in one spot in Reşad Bey Cemetery belongs to only one family despite the fact the dates vary from 1200 (1786 A.D.) to 1928, the year Turkey adopted the Latin script. It should be noted that the date on this particular tombstone is in A.D. although the whole inscription including the date is in Ottoman.

In a paper on the tombstones of Mardin Kapı Cemetery in Diyarbakır, I tabulated the contents of the inscriptions according to the formula adapted by Prokosch (in his article "Makbara" in EI2) for the Ottoman tombstone inscriptions. The details on the tombstones, however, I pointed out go beyond this formula. Also

the order of this formula many times is not strictly followed. Most of the times the entreaty is followed by *invocatio* or even the inscriptions start off with entreaty.

INVOCATIO:

A quite often-used *invocatio* on the Ottoman tombstones is “Huve’l-Baki” followed by “Haza markadi”. “Huve’l-Hayy”, “Huve’l-Hallaku’l-Baki” and “Huve’l-Mu’in” are the other most common forms of *invocatio*. I traced them on the tombstones of the villages of Tepecik and Kavakdere near Seferihisar, Akhisar, Merzifon, Amasya and Diyarbakır in Anatolia, and in Babadağ and Mangalia in Romania. The only expression close to the *invocatio* was “Blessed be the truthful judge”, a blessing common in Hebrew invoked upon the dead. This expression is mostly followed by the phrase “This is a tombstone of the burial of” and its variants. In one case this phrase is expressed as “Hanah who is buried (in here)” [see the tombstone number 4].

BENEDICTO:

The forms of *benedicto* on the Ottoman tombstones hardly vary. The standard is “merhum” (one whom God has taken into His mercy) either used on its own or with “mağfur” (one whose sins are forgiven) and their feminine forms if the deceased is female. The forms of *benedicto* on the Jewish tombstones likewise hardly vary. The standard expression is “the old and honourable woman madam” [see the tombstone number 16] or “a fine woman” [see the tombstone number 8]. In one case this form is expressed as “the woman of honour, a woman of valour” (*Eshet Hayil*), a phrase taken from Proverbs 31:1, and is often used formula for praising deceased women³⁰. This form of *benedicto* is suitable for the females as most of those buried in this deserted Jewish cemetery are ladies. The form of *benedicto* used for the males, as there is only one case, is “The true/right and exalted” [see the tombstone number 3]. The form of *benedicto* is very much dramatized for Yitscac (Isac) as he had died at a very young age. It runs as “You have altered my sweetness, where is the happiness of your wedding (hupah) ?, where is the light of praised (ormah)?

³⁰ Marienberg, E. (2003): ‘A Mystery on the Tombstones: “Women’s Commandments” in Early Modern Ashkenazi Culture’ in *Women in Judaism: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, Winter, vol. 3, nu. 2, pp. 2-3.

My father, my wedding (hupah) and the light, ... this is the “death yard”...³¹ [see the tombstone number 12].

ENTREATY (NĪYAZ):

Although in the inscription texts on the Ottoman tombstones the *benedicto* is followed by the *inscriptio*, I preferred to deal with the entreaty first because both *invocatio* and *benedicto* brings to our mind a call for *entreaty*. However, I must point out that it is natural both in documents and tombstone inscriptions the *inscriptio* should precede the entreaty for two reasons: i) we would like to know who we are requested to pray for, and ii) the Ottoman tombstone inscriptions are usually conclude with *entreaty*, that is requesting the visitors or the passers-by to read the “suretu’l-fatiha” for the soul of the deceased. Therefore, the form is standard and expressed in only two words:

“Ruhiçun fatiha”

“Ruhuna fatiha”

“Lillahi’l-fatiha”

In Hebrew the form is so much standard that it is abbreviated into five letters and put on the top of the almost all the tombstone inscriptions in Hebrew:

TNSBH (Taw th, t; Nun n, Çadhhe ç as in French word *garçon*; Beth bh, b; Heth h as *hakim* in Arabic).

This acronym of five letters is interpreted as:

“His/her soul will be bounded up in the bundle of the living”.³²

Apart from this standard abbreviated form of *entreaty* there are some other expressions that come in proper order of the formula

³¹ Grossman’s translation runs as: ‘How you embittered my life? Where is the happiness of your Wedding? Where is the joy of your ORMAH (or Urmah?) My Father? My wedding, my ORMAH(?) is the “Death Yard.”’

³² I Sam. 25:29; cf. Deut. 21:1-9. For an interpretation of these verses see E. W. Heaton: *The Old Testament Prophets*, Edinburgh 1969, p. 98.

adapted for the tombstones. Of these few are standard and simple such as:

i) "May she rest in peace, who passed away" (see the tombstone number 16)

ii) "Who passed to his eternal home" (see the tombstone numbers 3-6, 9 and 16)

On three of the tombstones part of the entreaty is a simple phrase abbreviated as "N'A" meaning "May his soul rest in Eden"³³.

Perhaps the most striking forms of entreaty are the phrases inferred from the Old Testament. There are three of these on the Jewish tombstones of Akhisar. The first one of these is preceded with *benedicto* and expresses the deeds of "a capable wife" given in details in Proverbs 30:10-31. It runs as follows:

"A fine woman (or "a woman of valor") who is God fearing she [see the tombstone number 8] (Proverbs 31:10 ff.) and her deeds praise her in the gates (Proverbs 31:31).

The second one is inferred from Jeremiah 2:1-2 and runs as follows:

"Went in wilderness and in steppes" (see the tombstone number 17)

In the Old Testament the sentence runs as:

"The word of the Lord came to me: Go, make a proclamation that all Jerusalem shall hear: These are the words of the Lord: I remember the unfailing devotion of your youth, the love of your bridal days, when you followed me in the wilderness, through a land unsown" (Jeremiah 2:1-2)³⁴.

³³ According to Minna Rozen "a number of inscriptions from the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries are of particular interest for their poetic grace." An inscription on such a tombstone translated by Minna Rosen indicates that the expression such as "Blessed be the True Judge", "Departed and gone, his tent in Eden" and "may he/she rest in Paradise" common to most of the Jewish tombstones can be inscribed on a single tombstone. See Rozen (1992): p. 74.

³⁴ *The New English Bible*, Oxford 1970.

The third one is part of the *entreaty* and an expression of full submission to God by someone whose son had died at the age of nineteen. It runs as follows:

“Whatsoever passes under the rod.”

The expression in the Old Testament (Leviticus 27:32) is:

“Every tenth creature that passes under the counting rod shall be holy to the Lord; this applies to all tithes of cattle and sheep”³⁵

In one case the *entreaty* calls for the passers-by to feel sorry for the parents who had lost their young son:

“...pity may... to his father and to his mother...” [see the tombstone number 10]

Yet in another case of *entreaty* the parents are called to lament:

“My father and my mother come here to the light of blessing in lamentation (on the death of).”³⁶ [see the tombstone number 2]

INSCRIPTIO:

The *inscriptio* is the most vital and interesting part of the tombstone inscriptions for the historians. In this part we drive information on name, title, rank, occupation of the deceased as well as his/her family ties and place of origin. It is unfortunate that the Jewish tombstones of Akhisar are few and are not as rich as the Ottoman tombstones regarding the information given as part of *inscriptio*. The information given does not go beyond the closest family connections such as “daughter of”, “son of” and “wife of”. The only elaborate case is “Mrs. (Lu)na the wife of Ya‘akov (Jacob) son of (...n)ya” (see the tombstone number 16).

DATE:

Of course the other important part of the formula is the date. The Jewish tombstones of Akhisar in this case do not lack the information. The dates for almost all the tombstones are given in full. The oldest tombstone in the cemetery as I pointed above is

³⁵ *The New English Bible*, Oxford 1970.

³⁶ Tal’s translation runs as “His/my father and his/my mother. Enter here to the place, seven Blessing To (?) With set/prepared/arranged lamentation.”

dated 27th of January 1884 (Sunday) (29th of *Tevet* 5644) and the latest one is dated 5th of February 1918 (Tuesday) (23 *Sh'vat* 5678). There is a period of 34 years between these two dates. I have already mentioned that there are about forty tombstones scattered in the cemetery. If we assume that there is at least one person from every Jewish family of Akhisar buried here and we multiply the number with five assuming five members for each family, we may be able to say that the Jewish population of Akhisar at the end of Nineteenth Century and the beginning of Twentieth Century was about 200. This figure corresponds to the figure of 300 orally given by the Office of the Registry of Births taking into account the natural growth of population, both births and deaths counted over the period.

CONCLUSION:

The resemblance between the Jewish and Ottoman tombstones both in content and formula is clear. A close study of them will also show that the both communities shared almost the same tradition. They lamented over their death and had graves built with inscribed tombstones for future remembrance. There is certainly an impact, but the extent and particulars of this impact is a subject matter of a thesis.

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APPENDICES

The Translation of Jewish Tombstones – Akhisar

1. Blessed be

Until this age and (lived with in this) clan
the tombstone ... the madam Kadin Rulsa

whose soul may rest in Eden
in/on ... 19th of *Tishrey*³⁷ (Sept./Oct.) 5677 (Monday, 16 October 1916).

2. Blessed be

His/my father and his/my mother. Enter here

To the place, seven

Blessing To (?)

With set/prepared/arranged lamentation

The girl from Kanah³⁸, the daughter of

Ya'akov Avrahamov ... ?

(11? 21?) *Sh'vat* (January or February).

3. *T N S B H*³⁹

Blessed be the Truthful Judge

... you ... of

the true/right and the exalted Ya'akov (Jacob)

who passed away

from to this world on the sixteenth day

of the month of *Sivan* (May/June)

the year

5674 ednesday, 10 June 1914).

4. *T N S B H*

Blessed be the Truthful Judge⁴⁰

Hannah whose is buried (in here?) (from the sun?)

... Yitzhaq (Isaac) and to Aharon (Aaron)

Who passed away from this world on the 10th day the month of

³⁷ Note that the Hebrew year starts with the New Month of *Tishrey*, which may occur in September or October. It is ahead of the Christian year until December (*Kislev* or *Tevet*).

³⁸ Kanah according to the Book of Joshua is a town in the north of the territory of the Tribe of Asher (see Joshua 19:8). It is identified with the village of 'Ain-Kana, 11 kilometers southeast of Tyre. See en.m.wikipedia.org

³⁹ This is an inscription on tombstones. It is an acronym of five letters, which is interpreted as the following: "May his/her soul be bounded in the bundle of life."

⁴⁰ This is a blessing, which is said for good tidings, especially upon the dead.

*Kislev*⁴¹ (Nov./Dec.) the year 5666 (Friday, 8 December 1905)

5.(T N S B H?)

Blessed be the Truthful Judge
(The one who passed away?) in his true world
Yitzhaq ... (on the day?)/
On the 2 day of the month Nisan (March/April) the year
5659 (1899).

6.T N S B H

Blessed be the Truthful Judge
His burial is (blessed) by the wisdom of God
And important Hayim Hazzan⁴² who passed away
(In his world) on the day of 22nd of the month of
Tamuz (June or July) the year of 5668 (Tuesday, 21 July 1908).

7.Blessed be the Truthful Judge

..... calling from
This stone refers to
(The anniversary) day of the passing away
my elderly father the (wise?)
... at Moses Mountain
... on the day of
8th of the month of *Sivan* (May or June), the year of
564(7) (Tuesday, 31 May 1887)
T N S B H

8.T N S B H

Blessed be the Truthful Judge
This is the tombstone of the burial of madam Matilda (?) Sara
A fine woman who is God fearing, she
And her deed praised her in the gates⁴³
... the wife of the Rabbi, the oldest one of (Eli?) the daughter

⁴¹ Note that the Hebrew year starts with the New Month of Tishrey, which may occur in September or October. It is ahead of the Christian year until December (Kislev or Tevet).

⁴² It is possible that Hayyim Hazzan was a member of Hazan family that dates back to 13th century. See Gizel Ender Hazan: *Hazan Genealogy: Aaron de Yosef Hazan (İzmir 1600-2000)*, n.d., pp. 4, 28 and 32.

⁴³ See Proverbs 31:31.

(?) his name “... the burial ...”⁴⁴
 On Thursday⁴⁵ (?) the fourteenth of twelfth month⁴⁶
 Of *Adar* (Feb./Mach)⁴⁷, the year
 5653 Thursday 2nd March 1893)

9. *T N S B H*

Blessed be the Truthful Judge
 This is the grave [in which] the woman
 Of honour, a woman of valour⁴⁸ Rudi (?)
 Fakun who passed away in her world
 On the 20th day of the month of Av (July/Aug.) the year
 5669/5669 (Saturday, 7 August 1909).

10. *T N S B H*

Blessed be the Truthful Judge
 A great bitter cry God's Torah (the five books of Moses)
 His eyes pouring tears mourning
 And moaning⁴⁹ (in the heart of?) his mother (?) ... and father
 And all his relatives on the boy Ya'akov
 Son of Noyah burned like a candle in his short days
 28th of the month *Tamuz* (June/July) all it is
 His burial pity may
 to his father and to his mother and being kept
 It will be bounded in the bundle of life
 ... (being signed?) 5668 (1907/1908).

11. Anim⁵⁰ cries bitterly on the passing of
 Yirmiyah son of David who had the honour of writing

⁴⁴ Alternatively translated as 'HH (the honourable?) his name 'Arod who passed to her AL (eternal home)'

⁴⁵ It is not clear, perhaps Saturday?

⁴⁶ i.e. the month of Adar

⁴⁷ Note that the present Jewish calendar starts in the Fall (Tishrey). However, the Biblical calendar, referred to here, start in Spring months of Nisan-March or April-and ends with Adar-February or March as written in Ex. 12:1-2. The last month - Adar - is doubled 7 times in a cycle of 19 years, to adjust the Lunar calendar to the Solar one i.e. 7 of 19 years have 13 months.

⁴⁸ See Proverbs 31:1.

⁴⁹ See Jes. 29:2; Thr. 2:5.

⁵⁰ 'Anim is a town in Judea, see Jos. 15:50. The word '*anim* also means a loud cry.

The book of Torah⁵¹ to commemorate his name and devoted the Holy
Book to the settlers of Jiftlik or
Yehuda died on the 9th day of *Elul* (August/September)
The year of 5667 (Monday, 19 August 1907).

12.Top of the tombstone: (inside the star of David): B-
HAGOZER⁵²

Aha my son my joy and my gladness!⁵³
How you embittered my life? Where is the of happiness of your
Wedding? Where is the joy of your ORMAH (or Urmah?)
My Father? My wedding, my ORMAH(?) is the "Death Yard"
Because this is the decision of the Creator. "Whatsoever passes
Under the rod."⁵⁴ Nice and pleasant, a young boy
Full of joy KHR (the Honourable Rabbi?) Yitshak (Isaac)
Nahum N'A⁵⁵
He died RAMAT GADISH (?) before his time aged 19 years. A
day bitter as poison⁵⁶
23 *Sh'vat* (Feb.) 5678 (Tuesday, 5 February 1918).

13.*T N S B H*

Blessed be the Truthful Judge
The passing away (in her world)
The honourable woman
The modest one, a fine woman
Luna La ... Jenia
On the 19th day of *Tamuz* (June/July) the year
(56)56 Tuesday, 30 June 1896).

14.Blessed ...

A fine woman

⁵¹ The Jewish custom is to read a specific (weekly) portion of Torah from an especially hand-written scroll, which contains the Five Books of Moses.

⁵² (cutter=judge ?)

⁵³ Tal translated as "Aha my joyful and rejoicing people."

⁵⁴ Here the reference is to Lev. 27:32, where it is stated the tithe of the herd (the ship or goat to be sacrificed to God), is determined by "passing the herd under the rod" (and marking each tenth animal).

⁵⁵ N'A is acronym of two letters, which is interpreted in Hebrew as following: "May his souls rest in Eden."

⁵⁶ Tal translates as - MK being as the acronym - for "May he rest in respect."

.....

Woman of

.....

.....

The year(5)668 (1908).⁵⁷

15.Blessed be the Truthful⁵⁸ Judge

This is the tombstone of the burial of Atzriyah NE⁵⁹

The wife of Nissim Kushti (May God keep him) **Ankatharit** (?)

Bekasruah Yemah (... his days were short?)

... on 29th of *Tevet* (Jan.) 5644 (Sunday, 27 January 1884).

16.This is the tombstone of the burial of

The old and honourable woman madam (Lu)na

The wife of Ya‘akov (Jacob) son of (...n)ya

May she rest in peace, who passed away

On the 14th of *Iyyar* (May) 5678 (Friday, 26 April 1918).

17.Blessed be the Truthful Judge

..... big

.....

.....

... on the day of *Tamuz* (June)

went in the wilderness [and] in the steppes (?)⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Could alternative reading be ‘Blessed Hutir (?)’/a women of valor/passed..../the wife of David/Shevat 5668 (January or February 1908).

⁵⁸ The word “Truthful” is misspelled here.

⁵⁹ May her soul rest in Eden

⁶⁰ See Jer. 2, 1.

[May her soul] be bonded in the bundle of life
 TRSV (Tav Resh Samech Vav) 5666 (June 1906).

17.Blessed be the Truthful Judge
 The passing away in her world
 (Nirah) the wife of Mordekhay
 on the 10th day of *Adar* (Feb./March)
 the year of 5667 (Sunday, 24 February 1907).

18.Here was interred
 Simha'le (?)
 ... humble madam.
 ... the wife of Mordekhay

 the good ...
 on the day ...
 28 ?) Kislev (November/December).

19.Top: unreadable
 ... his honesty
 ... in the memory of Ya'akov ...
 his eternal [home] the day ...
 the month of ...
 T N S B H
 5651 90/1891

20.Inscription in Greek characters on the sides.
 Hebrew – impossible to read
 Iyar (April or May) 5678 (?) (1919).

The Translation of two tombstones by Akın Tütüncü.

Inscription nu. 1:

Oh! My Pleasure, my happiness. My son
How my honey became bitter
Where is the gaiety of our marriage
Where is the light of happiness.

Dad. My marriage and my pleasure,
God's decision has worked.
That was it.
Beautiful and good, great young
YITSAK NAHUM, departed when 19
23 Şevat 5678 (23 February 1918)

Inscription nu. 2:

Let his soul find peace in heaven.
The real judge is holy.
Sharp and great scream.
Bitter tears roll down from eyes
His children, his father and his mother vry.
And all the close ones cry.
Young YAAKOV BENCUYA,
The one who went to his world very young,
The one who died (in fire) on the Tamuz
And buried in Elul of 5668 (1908)
Let God give peace to his soul in heaven.
(*Cf. translation number 10 in this article*)

Akhisar Jewish Cemetery - Hebrew transliteration

מצבות

.1

ברוך

.....

המצבה ל..... מרת קאדין דילכר

אשר (נעזב?) ב.....

בש..... 19 תשרי 5677

.2

ברוך

אבי(נו?) ואמו. באו פה

(ל?) מקום שבעה

ברכות (ל?)

בקיימת/בקיינות ערוכות

הנערה מקנה בת

יעקב (אברהמ'לה?)

... 1... שבט

.3

תנצבה (תהי נשמתו צרורה בצרור החיים)

ברוך דיין האמת

אתה של

הנכון הנעלה יעקב

..... שנפטר (לבית ?)

(עולמין?) ביום ששה

לחדש סון

שנת

5674

.4

תנצבה

ברוך דיין האמת

חנה הקברה הזה מהשמש

(?) יצחק ולאחרון

שנפטר בעולמו ביום 10 לח(דש)

כסלו שנ(ת) 5666

.5

(תנצבתה?)

ברוך דין האמת

.... בעולמו הנכ(ון)

יצחק (ביים')

5659

.6

תנצבה

ברוך דיין האמת
היא(ה)קבורתו מהימן
וחשוב חיים חזן שנפטר
בעולמו ביום 22 לחדש
תמוז שנת 5668

.7

ברוך האמת

.... קורא מן

לאבן הזאת על

.... פטירת

אבי ישיש

.... בהר משה

.... ביום

.... לחזו סיון שנת(ת)

564(?)

תנצבה

.8

תנצבה

ברוך דיין האמת

זאת מצבת קברת מרת

אשת חיל אשר יראת ה היא

והללה בשערים מעשיה

.... הרבנית בכורה (לאלי?) בת

(ה"ה?) שמו " הנפטרת " על

ביום חמישי (בש?) ארבעה עשר לח'

שנים עשר הוא חדש אדר שנת

....

.9

תנצבה

ברוך דיין האמת

זאת קבורת מהאשה

הבכורה אשת חייל

פאקון הנפטרת בעולמה

ביום לחדש אב שנת

5669/5669

10

תנצבה

ברוך דיין האמת
 נועקה גדולה תורת ה
 עניו יורדות
 בכיס אביו ואמו
 וכל קרוביו על הנער יעקב
 (ב) נזיה בקצרו
 ימים כח לחדש תמוז והיא
 קבורתו רחמים ישרת
 לאביו ולאמו ונשמר
 יהיה צרורה בצרור החיים
 (ש"?) (חתומה?) 5668

11.

ענים במד בוכה על פטירת
 ירמיה בן דוד אשר זכה לכתוב
 ספר תורה לשמו וקדש את ספר
 התורה לתושבי גיפטליק (או?)/אור
 יהודה (יעה?) ביום 9 אילול
 שנת 5667 תוצבר

12.

אהה בני גילי ומשושי איכה
 המרת שמחה
 חופתך איזה חמדת אור
 אני וחופתי ואור מתי זה הצר מות
 כי כן גזרת הבורא כל אשר יעבור
 תחת השבת: נחמד ונעים:
 שעשועים: כ"ה יצחק נחום (נ"ע?) ויגוע
 רמת גדיש בלא עתו כן י"ט שנה: יום
 : 23 שבט 5678 (נמ"ד?)

13.

מצבה(ה)
 ברוך (דיין האמת)
 הנפטרת בעלמה
 האשה הכבו(ד)ה
 הצנוע אשת חיל
 לונה לה
 ביום 19 תמוז שנת
 56

14.

ברוך
 אשת חיל

....
....
שנת 668....

15.
ברוך דיין אהמת
(....)מצבת קבורת אצטרייה נע
אשת ניסים קושט(ה) היו
בקצרה ביום כ"ט טבת שנת
5644

16.
זאת מצבת קבורת
הזקנה והנכבדת מרת
.... אשת יעקב (נ'?)
ייה (נע?) שנפטרת
ביום י"ד אייר 5678

17.
ברוך (דיין האמת)
....
....
....
.... ביום תמוז
....
.... צורה בצרור החיים
תר"פ 5666

18.
ברוך (דיין) האמת
הנפטרת בעולמה
(נירה?) אשת מרדכי
.... ביום 10 אדר
5667

19.
....
אשת חיל
....
.... מרת
.... אשת
....
....
ביזם
לח רחלו

**The Photographs of the Tombstones of Jewish Cemetery –
Akhisar**



Photo (1): See Hebrew transliteration and English translation
Nu. 1



Photo (2): See Hebrew transliteration and English translation
Nu. 2

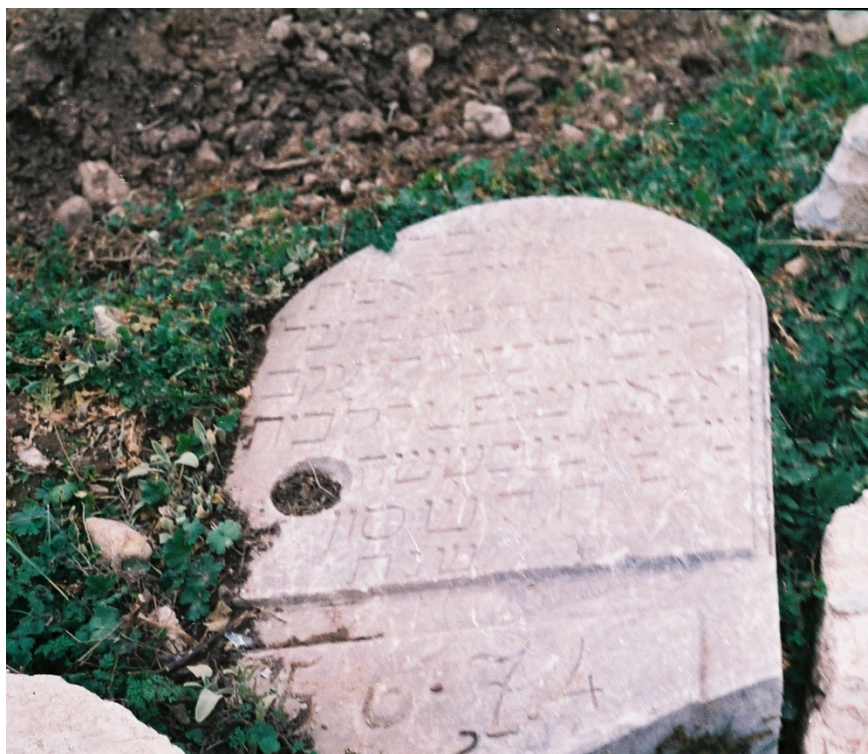


Photo (3): See Hebrew transliteration and English translation
Nu. 3



Photo (4): See Hebrew transliteration and English translation
Nu. 4.



Photo (5): See Hebrew transliteration and English translation
Nu. 5 (?)



Photo (6): See Hebrew transliteration and English translation
Nu. 6



Photo (7): See Hebrew transliteration and English translation
Nu. 7 (?)



Photo (8): See Hebrew transliteration and English translation
Nu. 8



Photo (9): See Hebrew transliteration and English translation
Nu. 9



Photo (10): See Hebrew transliteration and English translation
Nu. 10



Photo (11): See Hebrew transliteration and English translation
 Nu. 11



Photo (12): See Hebrew transliteration and English translation
Nu. 12



Photo (13): See Hebrew transliteration and English translation
Nu. 13



Photo (15): See Hebrew transliteration and English translation
Nu. 15



Photo (16): See Hebrew transliteration and English translation
Nu. 16



Photo (17): See Hebrew transliteration and English translation Nu. 17



Photo (18): See Hebrew transliteration and English translation
Nu. 18



Photo (19): See Hebrew transliteration and English translation
Nu. 19



Photo (20): See English translation Nu. 20



Photo (21): See English translation Nu. 21



Photo (22): The General View of the Cemetery in 1999



Photo (23): The General View of the Cemetery in 2001

Date	Length	Width	Note
5651	86	51	
5659	100	37	
5636	67	51	
5668	78	69	6 lines
5647	108	55	
5650	121	42	
5666	65	70	
5674	96	61	
5656	112	56	
Lahit	143	36	
5831	73	59	
5659	78	58	
5668	75	50	12 lines
5676	79	43	
5669	69	57	
5677	136	71	
In mud	91	57	
5668	117	63	7 lines
5667	60	62	
5657	76	60	
5656	165	52	
5644	69	60	
5678 in Greek	65	59	
5668 Small writing	110	55	
5667	106	84	
5678	83	61	With the star of David
5661	150	67	
5676	91	70	Illegible writing

The Jewish Tombstones Listed with Dates and Sizes

