

English Abstract

Tiberias – And the Settlements Which Surround It

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This article deals with the relationship that was forged between the rabbinic leadership in Tiberias- Tverya with the agricultural settlement movement, from the beginning of the 20th century until the end of the First World War, which was the time that the British Mandate began to enforce new governmental regulations.

The interaction between the settlements and the inhabitants of Tverya served the interests of both sides. Aside from the need of the settlers for the merchants and tradesmen in Tverya which served the settlements as a logistic and administrative center, they also needed the Sephardic community which had close ties with the Ottoman authorities in order to promote various matters relating to the settlements. On the other hand, the settlements provided temporary jobs during the "hot" agricultural seasons for the city people who suffered from poverty, and the arrival of the settlement people to shop in the city also contributed to its economic development.

The denigrating attitude of the members of the Second Aliya towards religion, and the "mentality gap" between them and the Sephardic workers created a disconnect between the members of the older and more established Tverya Yishuv with the agricultural settlement workers. The rabbinic leadership, both the Ashkenazi and Sephardi, which felt threatened by the displays of heresy, decided to defend itself and set out in a struggle against their trampling of religion.

A new chapter in this relationship began with the appointment of Rabbi Chaim Yissachar Abulafia to the position of the Chacham Bashi – the Chief Rabbi, in the year 5 671(1911). The new Chacham Bashi refused to take part in these acts of protest and the distancing which his predecessor Rabbi Aharon Bechor Al-Hadif had employed. He viewed the settlers as a positive force which could assist in raising the

city from its degenerative state, and therefore he worked diligently to develop relationships of trust and cooperation between both sides.

Within a short time the 'Joint Committee of Tverya and the Settlements' was established, though in reality it did not bring about any significant changes, it did signal the change in trend in the relationship between the city and the settlements. Rabbi Abulafia's approach was not accepted by all the members of the Sephardic community which continued to support the more conservative approach that his predecessors had implemented.

There was an attempt also from within the Ashkenazi community to bridge the gap between the city and its neighboring settlements. This bridging initiative had come from the national Ashkenazi leadership, and not from the local Tverya leadership. However this 'Rabbinic Campaign' targeting the settlements of the Galilee did not succeed in bridging the gap, and the more separatist approach of the local Ashkenazi leadership remained unchanged, and over time became even more extreme.