

At A Picnic



A picnic spot in Bursa. Lace dresses and wooden chairs.

Picnics were part of life in Bursa that you couldn't do without. We would go up to Uludag with buses. Barbecues were brought but the meat would be carried from home. The rules of kashrut were always in effect. Even the dolmas and salads were prepared from home. The breaking of the ropes of melons and watermelons that were thrown down wells to keep them cold at times would cause disappointments (Because using refrigerators wasn't widespread in those days, melons and watermelons would be tied up and lowered to wells in summer to keep them cold. Sometimes the watermelon or melons would be too heavy, the rope would break and the watermelon and melons would fall into the well).

In those days traffic did not resemble today's mess, there were few motorized cars, and one horse-carriages were vehicles that were used (she used the ladino term "talika brijka" for the horse-carriage). Obviously in a neighborhood where automobiles were seldom seen, even if there weren't playgrounds designed for children, the streets, the gardens were our play areas. We grew up with this distinction, the orchards and gardens were ours. We would play hopscotch (We would draw squares in the street with chalks, would skip on one foot to move the stone while not letting it touch the lines. In every neighborhood, different rules would be applied to the game of hopscotch. We would explain those who came from other neighborhoods the rules of that neighborhood. For example, holding the stone on top of your foot while playing would make it more difficult, but that was another rule) in the streets, jump rope.

The hamam is one of the biggest features of Bursa. The mikveh habit of older ladies would be satisfied in the hamam too. It was customary to prepare food for the hamam entertainment. One of the favorite pastimes of those days was for a few families to get together to go to the Gonlu Ferah Hotel in Chekirge (Chekirge is a district of Bursa famous for its hot springs. It has hamams that are left from the old times. It is known that these waters are therapeutic and you could go there for medical purposes. Until a short while ago, taking baths as a cure for rheumatism with a doctor's recommendation was a valid procedure).

Going to the Gonlu Ferah Hotel was the favorite entertainment of those days. There were one-story hotels, rooms with their private hamams, and multiple room hotels also in Chekirge. When you went to Chekirge, you would sit in the gardens. Chatting in gazebos covered in vines was one of the preferred pastimes of our elders. Sometimes these outings were not for one day, but could last a few days, because the men went to and from work in Chekirge.