Solomon Judah Rapoport (Shir): Haskalah, Rabbinate, Nationalism



Solomon Judah Rapoport (acronym Shir: 1790, Lemberg – 1867, Prague) was one of the most unique, colorful and enigmatic figures of 19th c. Jewry. Besides being a brilliant Tora scholar, Shir was also one of the leaders of the Haskalah movement in Galicia. He wrote in Hebrew and translated poetry and drama into Hebrew from German and French. A historian and biographer, linguist and lexicologist, thinker and essayist, editor and critic, he was among the fathers of Wissenschaft des Judentums. He was also an indefatigable spiritual guide and polemicist, and during the last decades of his life, served as the rabbi of Prague.
The great scholars of his days and later recognized this Renaissance man as a path-breaking figure of great creativity who exerted profound influence on the major processes in the broader Jewish community for generations to come.
This study seeks to describe the ideological and culture processes led by Rapoport, in conjunction with some of his close acquaintances, such as his teacher and long-time friend Nachman Krochmal,

his colleague and correspondent Samuel David Luzzato, and his friend Isaak Doc Ber Levinson. Existing scholarly literature on Rapoport emphasizes his pioneering Maskilic and research activities, his nature as a prototypical Tora-observant Maskil and later, as a Mascilic rabbi, as well as his role as one of the founders of Wissenschaft des Judentums. The research of Nathan Shifris gives a much-lacking place of honor to the legacy he provided in his long-standing battle to restore the unity of the Jewish nation in a new uniting national framework.

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