

JUDAH LOB RAPOPORT - HIS ATTITUDE  
TOWARDS  
ORTHODOXY AND REFORM

Submitted in part requirement for graduation  
from the Hebrew Union College,

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May 1, 1924

*mic. 6/78*

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## CHAPTER I

### BIOGRAPHY OF JUDAH LOB RAPOPORT

A deeper knowledge of Judaism was unexpectedly aroused in a country which cultured Jews were accustomed to despise.<sup>1</sup> As it was formerly asked, what good can come out of Galilee, so it was said, what good can come out of Galicia? Yet from this very place there came fruitful seeds which developed into healthy blossoms. But were we to penetrate beyond the surface of things we would not be surprised at the fact that the flower of culture sprouted in the soil of Galicia, for Galicia was not a "barren-place, a desert"--but the abode of Jewish learning for hundreds of years. And, moreover, General culture began to manifest its influence at the end of the 18th century. In 1772 the province of Galicia was annexed to the Austrian empire, which event afforded great relief to the oppressed Jews, for they were no longer subjugated to the whims and caprices of every Polish nobleman, but were now governed by the laws of the Austrian empire. In addition to the material and political benefit accruing from the annexation, the Jews received the benefit of the general culture, which emanated from Germany and entered through the window, as it were, into the Jewish schools of learning. Joseph II bent all his effort and energy toward the propagation of culture. His aspirations were to combine the various elements of his conglomerate empire into a unified whole, and he hoped to accomplish this by instilling into them the general culture, so that they might possess a common tongue, a common goal. Since their jargon was somewhat akin to German, Emperor Joseph desired especially to implant the roots of learning in the hearts of the Jews, who resided in his realm. Two causes prevented

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1. Graetz, Hist of the Jews, vol 5. p. 607

him from carrying out his program. In the first place his reign was of short duration and he himself at the end of his reign was compelled to tear down many of the buildings which he had erected on a weak foundation. In the second place, he utilized unfortunate means to accomplish his purpose, since his goal was not so much to inculcate knowledge, but to influence them to sever their connections with their faith. The school houses were usually places where atheism was rampant, the men who were selected to supervise were men who ridiculed religious matters. This state of affairs did not aid the spread of culture but rather hindered it. Men who were loyal to their religious convictions began to suspect the new culture, and those subjects which formerly were regarded as innocent and innocuous, were now considered as pathways leading to the brink of agnosticism and apostasy. This attempt of Joseph II to compel Jews to drink from the wells of general learning constituted a great loss to the cultural development of Jewry, for had he proceeded properly, had he utilized the proper agencies, his aim and goal would have been successful, for the times and conditions were very favorable for the growth of culture.

To stem the tide of culture which then swept through Galician Jewry, there arose a ח'ד'ו'ן an ultra orthodoxy which fought the new culture tooth and nail. Even then ה'תק"ל began to regard with suspicion secular studies. But no man can stop the onrushing floods of knowledge and education. In the large cities the rumors and reports of the ה'תק"ל enthralled the imagination and captivated the mind of the youth. The rich merchants also aided the movement by bringing back the new ideas which they contracted on coming in contact with the disciples of Mendelsohn. <sup>etc</sup> ~~There~~ seeds of a new intellectual movement were sown, and hence it is not at all surprising to see the flower of Jewish learning blooming on the soil of Galicia.

It was amidst such conditions that Judah Lob Rapoport was born. He beheld the first rays of sunlight on June 1, 1790 in the city of Lemberg. Graetz<sup>2</sup> and Zunz<sup>3</sup> are of the opinion that Rapoport was descended from a renowned Jewish family, a race of learned Rabbis, one of whose branches had been transplanted from Italy to Poland. Bernfeld, however, maintains that the family name of Rapoport was a renowned one and evoked admiration, but the immediate family of Judah Lob<sup>4</sup> was not a respected one. His father possessed the knowledge which the general run of Jewish men possessed, but was by no means a scholar. Nor was he extremely wealthy, but had sufficient means to support his family in a comfortable fashion. But when Rapoport reached maturity and began to mingle among men, he<sup>father</sup> lost his wealth in a bad business transaction, and he was reduced to such a low state that he was compelled to become a tax appraiser to earn a livelihood for his family. This position was detested by all Jews, since the person involved was regarded as an informer, as one aiding the government against his own brethren. This very fact, namely, that he was compelled to become a tax appraiser proves conclusively that he was not descended from a renowned family, nor was he a scholar, for were he distinguished either in family relations or in knowledge, his fellow townsmen would have never permitted him to earn his bread by such infamous means.

Nothing of great importance happened during the youth of Judah Lob. At an early age he was admitted to the study of the Torah, and was soon at home in its labyrinths, owing to his extraordinary memory and penetrating acuteness. When Rapoport reached the proper age he went to the Beth Hamidrash in one of the suburbs of Lemberg, and there he began to interest and acquaint himself with events that were taking place outside

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2. Graetz. p. 610

3. T. Shir, p. 42

4. T. Shir p. 4

of the camp of Israel. The era was especially ripe for the development of an eager and serious youth. When Rapoport was about 15 years old he heard the wondrous tales <sup>ad of</sup> relative to Napoleon, of the new ideas which were then sweeping through the world, some of which must have surely stolen into the ~~mind~~ <sup>mind</sup> of the Jewish student. The Jewish student had already heard of Lessing, the saint of the Gentiles, of his relationship with the Jewish Socrates. They fabled about Mendelsohn, and repeated the stories of his greatness, of his conversations with Frederick II, with whom he was very intimate. They read zealously his ~~works~~ <sup>works</sup> which enabled them to appreciate pure German and which bred in them a desire for more of the German literature. They devoured from cover to cover all the works of Lessing and Schiller. <sup>He</sup> Despite the fact that he was not favorably inclined toward the Jews, Schiller ~~was~~ made a special <sup>appeal</sup> to them by his exalted and emotional style, his flowery phrases, which harmonized well with the temperament of the students, who loved a flowery style and ornate phrases. This tendency was displayed to a marked degree in one of Rapoport's works on the style of Schiller.

We do not know, nor do we possess any authentic account of the events of his boyhood. There are many legends, attempting to account for the scientific spirit with which J<sup>U</sup>dah was endowed, of his extraordinary skill as historian and critic. The following beautiful legend was one of the many current ones. When Rapoport was about 20 years old he had to flee in order to evade the draft, but unfortunately, or rather fortunately, so the legend runs, he concealed himself in a small village where a troop of soldiers were stationed. By accident the captain saw him one day, and as soon as he caught sight of him, he detected the genius latent in him. The commander offered his services to implant in him a desire for French literature. With the aid of the commander he read Bayle and other French authors and through the efforts of this army man there was aroused in Rapoport a

desire for research, a passion for investigation into the history of his own people.

This story which Jellinek<sup>Jellinek</sup> took and embellished, and which was published a month after the death of Rapoport, was received by the public as an authentic story. Though there may be a grain of truth in it, the greater part of it is merely a legend and a fabrication of the imagination. There was no law to the effect that all young men of a certain age were compelled to enter the army. Each community contributed a certain fixed number, and usually a certain sum was donated in place of the recruits. Or they would select the waifs and the less capable, but it is very dubious that a young man of promise, nay, rather of genius, would be selected. There is no need of fabricating tales, of resorting to legends to account for Rapoport's zeal and ability in the field of critical research. Rapoport himself gives us the clue as to when <sup>he</sup> entered the paradise of wisdom and ate of the tree of knowledge. In his eulogy over Krochmal he says, "Thirty years have elapsed since I first met him and saw the splendor of his countenance. As soon as I spoke to him, the spirit of understanding and knowledge came over me and I was converted into another being."<sup>5</sup> Rapoport made it a practise, at least once a month, to take a journey from Lemberg to Zolkiew, to visit the bold and at the same <sup>time</sup> ~~timid~~ philosophical inquirer Krochmal, and to enter into intellectual conversation with him. This intercourse with his gifted young friend became such a necessity to Krochmal that whenever he was engaged in a subject of research, he sought out Rapoport in Lemberg to reach clearness by an interchange of ideas. Rapoport needed only suggestion; he had inborn taste and love for Jewish history



and as he possessed both scholarship and keen perception, he made prolific discoveries. In the interchange of thought between master and disciple, they in company arrived at ~~an~~ important results, and in the end they did not know from whose mind they had emanated. It is therefore perplexing to know exactly which of the many results of their common investigations are to be ascribed to the master and which to the disciple. These fruitful conversations between Krochmal and Rapoport marked the birth of science of Judaism on the historical side. But we must admit that the book of Beyle had also a strong influence upon Rapoport. For despite their combined discoveries, Krochmal had more liking for general and encyclopaedic studies, while Rapoport, on the other hand, was more interested in minute, especially in biographical research. This interest in the detail and in the minutia Rapoport derived most likely from Beyle. In the introduction to

הנהגה של בני ישראל איתן he says "It is extremely necessary and important to compute the years of every scholar to know how long he lived."

Rapoport married the daughter of רבי אריה לייב the author of the שו"ת צמח צדק. His father in law was not aware of the fact that he was a חסיד and when he was informed that his son-in-law was able to speak French he laughed and said "I know that my son-in-law oftentimes gives expression to foolish statements. I thought that he utters vain things in one language only, but now he will utter foolish things in French also." Rapoport wrote comments to the ספר חסידים which marked him as one well versed in the intricacies of the Talmud. In his early manhood he also wrote a treatise against Rabbi Jacob Orenstein, the author of שו"ת יעקב אורן and he showed the sources from which Orenstein obtained his material. Erter, the great poet, took the material for his satires against Orenstein from this treatise of Rapoport's.

Rapoport was supported and sustained by his father until the age of 27, and this afforded him ample time to indulge in matters of the intellect. Fortunately he was not compelled to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow, but he could utilize his time in becoming well versed in intellectual fields, in conversing with Isaac Erter, Samson Bloch, Judah Mises and other members of the literary circle in Lemberg.

In his early years Rapoport dabbled in poetry and attempted to translate some of the poems of Schiller. His translations were of little merit, for Rapoport was not endowed with poetical feeling. In 1814 he wrote a "description of the city of Paris and the Island of Elba". The dwellers of the ghetto read it eagerly, for it <sup>was</sup> very timely and dealt with conditions and situations transpiring at the very moment.

Gradually Rapoport forsook the delights of his youth, namely the works of light character as poetry, translations, etc, and began to interest and busy himself in critical research. We see the first fruits of his investigation in the long letter which he wrote to Buk to dissuade him from joining the Hassidic <sup>sect</sup> ~~set~~. In this letter he describes graphically the conditions of his time:-- "You undoubtedly saw some of the respected citizens who were gathered at the home of your father--you beheld their hypocrisy- you saw how they plotted, how they took bribe. You saw that this was not the proper path leading to happiness - you sought a refuge, and you thought you would find it in the harbor of Hassidism."

Bick.

In 1817, when his father lost all of his wealth, and was reduced to poverty, Rapoport was thrown upon his own resources. He became a cashier for meat tax farmers, a very tiresome and tedious position. It was doubly trying in view of the fact that he was compelled to listen to the angry mumblings and murmurings of those who were in supervision. In

1827 he wrote to one of his friends<sup>6</sup> "Behold I am a servant to many masters, how wearisome the work is! I am compelled to listen to murmurings and mutterings. But what distresses me mostly is the loss of time. You know how precious time is in my eyes. During the day I am busy with my work and in the night I cannot sleep because of worry. Oh! all that I have acquired will gradually sink into the sea of forgetfulness. Oh! when I think of it, my hair stands on edge."

In addition to the trouble and anxiety, that of furnishing material means for his family, Rapoport incurred the hatred of the fanatics, of those who detested the new culture. Rapoport unlike his master Krochmal, who kept his views under cover, bared the secrets of his heart to the world and revealed the results of his investigations to the public, oftentimes to the dismay and discomfiture of the ultra pious. He had moreover aroused the ire of Rabbi Orenstein by the criticism of his book *אגודת ישראל*, as was stated above. It can be easily seen, therefore, that the works and deeds of Rapoport and his circle were regarded as heretical and as undermining the faith and unity of the community, that they were influencing the youth to depart from the old paths and travel on the new.

One night in 1816 or 1817 a ban of excommunication was found affixed to the gate of the synagogue. It was directed against four men, who were said to teach heretical views, viz, Rapoport, Erter, Natkes and Pastor. The ban, which caused a great furore in the city, read as follows: "Brethren, it has been known that of late the study of German has spread among the inhabitants of our city, and the responsibility can be placed at the door of 2 well known young men - Rapoport and Natkes. Openly and

unabashed they read the Bible in the translation of Mendelsohn. They also persuade men to study languages and sciences; therefore we decree that these men shall be excommunicated." The formal excommunication, customary in olden days had been forbidden since the time of Emperor Joseph. Although this matter was not the work of Rabbi Orenstein but of some unknown over-zealous Hassidim, the "intellectuals", believing that this would be an opportune moment to take revenge on those who had fought the intellectual movement, brought this affair before the authorities, maintaining<sup>ing</sup> that Rabbi Orenstein was responsible for the ~~law~~ of excommunication. The Rabbi replied that his hands were clean of the whole transaction. But the "intellectuals" ~~men~~ prevailed upon the Austrian government to compel Rabbi Orenstein to make a public declaration in his synagogue that he was not responsible for the affair. A certain young <sup>man</sup> ~~boy~~, an employe in the Austrian government was appointed to see that the public declaration was carried out. Inasmuch as Rabbi Orenstein could not speak German, in which language the law demanded that the declaration be made, he delivered his talk in a <sup>qui</sup>et tone to the interpreter, and the interpreter, in turn delivered it to the public. The ~~boy~~, the official selected to supervise the proceedings would interrupt the Rabbi to cry out "A little louder, we cannot hear you" The ~~men~~ who were present enjoyed themselves immensely at the expense and honor of a Rabbi in Israel. This occurrence was and will be an eternal reproach, an everlasting stain upon the name of the "intellectuals" of <sup>the</sup> ~~early~~ <sup>days</sup> times.

There is something to be said in favor of the enemies of Rapoport, for although he loved his people, his associations with men of this type rendered him a suspicious and obnoxious person in the eyes of the more faithful.

These occurrences, <sup>and</sup> events did not stay the intellectual development of Rapoport. We have already seen the first budding out of his genius in the letter which he wrote to Buk, and which displayed his critical acuteness and versatility in the Jewish fields of learning. But his ability, however, displayed itself to a greater degree in an article which he published in the "Bikkun Ha ittim" in 1824 under the title "an article on the independent Jewish tribes of Arabia and Abyssinia." This work contained a good deal of scientific material and was regarded <sup>very</sup> highly. This article was of such merit that Fürst published a German translation of it in his journal "החב"ה" in the year 1840 when research was at <sup>the</sup> ~~its~~ height of its glory. Despite the great value of this treatise of Rapoport, he did not climb the heights to which he attained when he was about forty, which fact is to be attributed to the condition in which he found himself. ~~His~~ His work consumed all of his time and energy, leaving him but a few moments for study and research. In one of his letters, he complains very bitterly, "My thoughts are scattered. You speak of the trouble which befalls men who seek the truth, to hinder their progress, as if they were appointed by Satan to defeat the efforts of those who would achieve progress and happiness for mankind." <sup>7</sup> When he was in Prague he graphically described the painful path trodden by him and his peers in order to arrive at the tree of knowledge. It was difficult to obtain any scientific book, most difficult to obtain one in a European language. The index of books prohibited by public opinion was much more comprehensive than that of the ~~pages~~ <sup>pages</sup>. If one thirsting for knowledge secretly procured such a book, it

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7. K.H. vol 1 p. 83

was scented out by the prying eyes of his relatives or friends, he was implored to throw it aside, ~~at~~ his friends on their own responsibility confiscated the heretical work, so as to preserve the student from fanatical persecution by the Chassidim. Even clear minded men were doubtful whether the study of profane sciences were not forbidden.<sup>8</sup>

In 1828 Rapoport returned again to the delights of his youth, and translated a work of Racine's which he published in the Bikkure Haittim under the title of הַתִּיבָּה הַזֹּאת. The work is not of great literary value, for, as it has been stated above, the muse had not endowed Rapoport with poetical powers. But in the introduction he revealed some of the result of his zealous investigation, and also displayed his love and his admiration for his people. "Do you not know," he wrote, "that the existence of our people has been the miracle of the ages. Those nations who trusted in strength, in armies, have gone the way of all flesh, but our people, who sought refuge under the shadow of the wings of God, have survived them all, etc."

Gradually Rapoport changed from the "intellectual" who dabbled in works of a light character as poetry, translations, etc, to the great investigator of the annals of our people, to one of the builders of the temple of wisdom of Israel. He was not an intellectual who suddenly sprang up over night, but his contributions reveal a great familiarity and versatility in the lore of his people, the acquisition of which must have extended over a long number of years. His fame began to spread throughout the Jewish world. Many came to hear the wisdom uttered by

מנחם  
ה'תקצ"ו

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8. K.H. vol 6 p. 45







important phases of the philological, historical and cultural aspects of our literature, and practically each paragraph contains something worth while, something that shows great research and great critical qualities. In it we see the vastness of his knowledge, of his acquaintance with all the phases of Judaism, especially in <sup>the</sup> explanation of strange words in the Talmud. The style is beautiful, simple, short and consise. With a few phrases he reveals the treasures hidden in the literature of our people. 11a

This work, in addition to its great literary merit, serves as the attorney in defense of Rapoport. There were many and are many who maintain that Rapoport prided himself on two works which he never wrote. They claim that ~~הוא~~ <sup>הוא</sup> was never written, that the 1st part of <sup>the</sup> ~~הוא~~ <sup>הוא</sup> was composed in the latter years of his life and hence he was merely prevaricating.

"But when we look, <sup>book</sup> into this", Bernfeld continues, "we can easily see that Rapoport had practically all the material for these two works, for in this <sup>each</sup> book every bin of the granaries is full of substance, in every line there can be found a profound remark and a sage expression. Had he not been compelled to enter the Rabbinate to earn a livelihood, he would have undoubtedly published these two works. The blame cannot be placed at his door, but must be attributed to those who hindered him from zealous study. And furthermore, it appears that he only lacked the proper arrangement, but he had the material either in writing or in his remarkable memory. We must carefully seek in other places; we may not find them in their proper place but he may have written it in other sections. We have such an instance in a letter to <sup>Shadal</sup> ~~Shadal~~ in which he records the merit of ~~הוא~~ <sup>הוא</sup> the Alexandrian Philo. He writes as follows: "Just as the rabbi is not justified in the rest of his arguments against ~~הוא~~ <sup>הוא</sup>, as I have shown to ~~א~~

greater length in *דבר אגב*". The *דבר אגב* was as yet not published. He had undoubtedly the material either in writing or in his memory.<sup>12</sup>

The *דבר אגב* published in 1830 possesses great merit and displays the great ability of Rapoport. The work also gained Rapoport many enthusiastic friends and a good deal of praise. In this work Rapoport erred in a number of details, but this does not detract from the value of this biography.

In his next biographical work "The Time and Place of Eliezer Kalir" Rapoport missed his mark entirely. Rapoport placed the time of Kalir in the 10th century and the place of his activity in Italy. In his old age, after a great deal of discussion Rapoport admitted that he erred in the time of Kalir, and placed the period in the 9th century. But even then he was not correct in his conclusions. As scholars have proven, Kalir did not live in Italy, but in Syria. Not only did he live prior to Saadya, but even prior to Natronai Gaon.<sup>13</sup> But despite the errors, the work "the time and place of Eleazar Kalir" is very valuable.

In 1831 he merely added certain notes to his previous articles. In 1832 he published two more works *דבר אגב* and *דבר אגב*.

*דבר אגב* both containing very valuable comments. In the *דבר אגב*

he made the remark which astounded and hurt the feelings of the ultra-orthodox, that most of the early Gaonim knew very little of the Jerusalem Talmud..

These works created a great sensation throughout the Jewish world. Never had anyone acquired such great fame in such a short period of time as Rapoport had. All had the feeling that a new period and a new era had arisen in the cultural development of Israel due to the efforts of Rapoport. Through these works he received recognition in the scholarly world and

13. Dor Chacham p. 22

gained many enthusiastic friends. Shadal wrote that famous letter to him, <sup>14</sup>  
"Thou art my brother and I thank thee, my father, and I exalt thee" Zunz  
ends his book "Homilies of the Jews in Divine Worship" with the following  
words: "It is not an admission on my part, but it must be evident to  
anyone that I must thank and pay my respects to Rapoport whose name I  
have mentioned on 110 different occasions in my book. Not only am I  
obligated to him for the help received from his works, but more so from  
the letters which he has written me during the last three years." Rabbi  
Solomon Judah Rapoport at Lemberg, an offspring of a renowned family, has  
acquired great fame especially through his works published in the Bikkure  
HaIttim. They contain the life and the history of the great sages in  
Israel of the 10th and 11th centuries. In his work he built a wonderful  
edifice on the field of research, for this man is endowed with great powers  
of research." 14

Moses Landau forgave him for the article which he directed against  
and began to correspond with him. In 1835 Geiger wrote of him, "Rapoport  
dwells among his own people in Lemberg. Were he not a Jew, he would become  
a professor in one of the universities." Delitch wrote of him, "The broad  
and wide Hebrew literature, with all of its hidden treasures, the paths of  
that wonderful literature are known to Rapoport. His six works in the  
Bikkure HaIttim constitute a great medium for those who busy themselves  
in Hebrew literature and desire to give their readers a true picture of  
its influence

At the height of his glory Rapoport's circumstances became  
straitened. In a letter to Luzatto he complained bitterly over his con-  
dition. "Behold," he wrote, "I am a hired servant, a servant to many  
masters." <sup>15</sup> And he inquired whether or not there was any hopes of his

becoming a teacher in the seminary over which Luzatto had been appointed. In 1832 the farming of the meat taxes fell into the hands of his enemies and he was left without a source of income. His lot was a bitter one. In one of his letters to Luzatto he wrote "The work from which I had earned a livelihood for my family these 15 years is gone."<sup>16</sup> and in another letter he wrote, "You have already heard how the fountain of my sustenance <sup>is</sup> dried up; for boys of no account have come and have taken over the business in which I had a share and for which I was the cashier." Then he endeavored with the aid of Zunz to ~~xxx~~ secure a rabbinate in Berlin. We are still in doubt whether Zunz endeavored to procure a position for him, but perusing the letters of Zunz, it is evident that he did strive to procure a rabbinate for Rapoport, but he failed, due most likely to the fact that Rapoport was not sufficiently proficient in German. Rapoport also attempted to secure a rabbinate in Italy but he was informed that a university diploma was required, and hence he was ineligible for a rabbinate there. He was in dire straits as is evidenced by a letter of his, "I do not know what to do. I shall be compelled to go out into the streets and beg. Oh! When I think that I will be compelled to neglect my studies and sell myself forever to material things."

But in the beginning of 1833 the intellectual Jews of Brody established a business and made Rapoport its superintendant, as we are informed in a letter to Luzatto. "Four months ago I returned to my former position. Formerly I was the cashier and did the work of 3 men, but at the beginning of this year I joined a new group on the condition that my work be reduced and rendered easier. The rabbi of this city and his son (referring to Orenstein) fought against me and tried to alienate those who

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16. I Shir p. 229

sponsored<sup>ing</sup> the new business, from me. They were instrumental in having people abstain from buying our meat, causing a great financial loss. They did the same thing two years ago. They drove my former partners out of business. What shall I say? - They have been quarrelling and disputing with me these 17 years, and they have not ceased to persecute me. I have never done anything that would hurt their feelings, only in that my views are different from theirs. During all these years I never saw them nor even entered their home, but now when they assembled to persecute me again, I entered their home. I asked them "what is my sin, <sup>my crime</sup> ~~the cause~~, that you persecute me?" They could not and did not answer. I was in conversation with them the whole day. Finally they were too humiliated to fight against me and I remained at my old work."<sup>16</sup> In 1834 Rapoport hoped that he would be relieved of his work and would be able to become a teacher in the seminary of Joseph Perles. His hopes were never realized.

In those days he incurred the wrath and ire of the ultra-orthodox by a letter which he published in the first issue of the *Tor Uro*. In this letter he contrasted the method of the Babylonian school with that of the Palestinian school. He correctly pointed out that in many respects the Babylonian school had a bad influence on the spiritual and cultural development of Israel. Many even were ~~haughty~~ hypocritical lovers of casuistry. The academy of Pumbeditha was especially the sinner in this respect. The *·X·* of Pumbeditha was and is a well known phrase. This letter, with its pungent remarks, aroused a good deal of discussion and also enmity. This article of his was always recalled to him by his enemies whenever they wished to harm him.



or retired. In this instance, as well, the majority of the members of the congregation did not desire to perpetrate such an unheard of crime, but it was effected by the few leading men, those of great influence, who undoubtedly reasoned that to bring a man of the caliber of Rapoport to Tarnapol, the crime of removing an old rabbi was not great and hence was justified. They were aided in their endeavors by an official decree which demanded that the new rabbi must be selected during the lifetime of the old rabbi. A proclamation was issued for the first time in the history of Galician Jewry, a practice imported from Germany, to the effect that whosoever wishes to assume the Rabbinical duties in Tarnapol must submit his desire and his credentials to the governmental officials. This proclamation was issued, most likely, to point out to the general public, that no favoritism was displayed, that there was no conspiracy in the whole procedure. They did not, therefore, write to Rapoport, but waited until he, of his own accord, would send in his request. Rapoport dispatched a letter to the congregation in which he wrote as follows:

"In accordance with the proclamation of the government, I have sent in my name as a candidate for the rabbinate in Tarnapol. I have not done this out of pride, out of self-confidence, and without knowing beforehand the will of the leaders of this congregation. Heaven forbid that I should act in such a manner, for I know that without the consent and good will of the members of the congregation, no rabbinate can accomplish anything. But since many of my friends have informed me that the men of the city of Tarnapol and especially the leading men are favorably inclined towards me, that they had already written a letter of greeting to me to ask me to assume the rabbinical duties at Tarnapol, which, however, was not sent for some unknown reason; having been informed of all this I sent in my application to the officials. My heart tells me that I will be able

to discharge my duties faithfully and to the satisfaction of all."

Very few rabbis applied for the rabbinical position, either out of respect for the old rabbi, or because they knew that the leading men desired Rapoport. Perles, the main instigator must have had the feeling that the whole procedure was conducted improperly, for he determined not to place Rapoport's request before the officials until an application from another rabbi was received. Perles himself gave a version of the whole affair. He wrote, "It was well known that when Rapoport was informed by some members of our congregation of the opening in our congregation, he sent a letter to me. But I informed him that I was silent with regard to the rabbinical position. When he sent in his application to one of his friends, I took it and hid it. I determined to place his application before the examiners only in case there were other applications. When I was informed that the examiners had received an application from another rabbi, I placed Rapoport's letter before them." Rapoport was finally selected, obtaining <sup>33</sup>~~30~~ out of 36 votes.

But his appointment was met with great opposition and uproar, not only by a few but by the majority of the people. Goldberg, the editor of the Keren Hemed, who was an intimate friend of Rapoport, wrote as follows: "The lovers of strife and hatred and the haters of truth began to lift up their voices and to carry evil reports about this great man. At first they thought they would obtain money from him. They fabricated lies and forgeries and placed them on the walls of the houses of the city. They threatened with excommunication all those who would go out to welcome the newly elected rabbi. Then that great prince in Israel arose and announced publicly that he rejoiced to see a shepherd of the type of Rapoport in his community. This statement by Perles infuriated

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the rebellious group and they began to send letters of hate to the cities near by and far away. They went to the extent of sending unsigned letters to Lemberg, to frighten Rapoport into not coming to Tarnopol. But all of these efforts were met with utter failure."

This view is merely one aspect of the affair. Unbiased persons <sup>reported</sup> ~~repeated~~ that not only were the riffraff and the lowly opposed to him, but even men of great learning and importance were utterly dissatisfied with his selection. It is true that the tumult and terror which characterises Rapoport's stay in Tarnopol was carried on by a few worthless and ignorant men, but if the majority had not been in sympathy with them, they would not have been able to carry on their activities to such an extent. There are some who maintain that Krochmal, anticipating the trouble which would befall his pupil, advised him to desist from assuming his duties, and when Rapoport declined to do so, the ties of friendship were broken between the two men. This is not corroborated by a letter sent to Rapoport by his teacher. We read as follows: "You know my present unbearable condition... Words cannot express my joy on hearing of your new position even tho, ~~the~~ the path is difficult and is among stones of pestilence; know that the goal is beautiful and that the reward <sup>is</sup> commensurate with the efforts. Verily you are the "man for the job," fitted for it from the day you were born. The principal thing is to have courage and not to be dismayed too easily. Do not pay attention to the small foxes who are always ready to destroy every beautiful vineyard. There are only two or three who are murmuring against you. A good proof of this can be found in the fact that all the letters which have reached here are unsigned, and their contents show that they emanate from one source. As to your request that ~~at~~ I accompany you to Prague, I would be only too glad to do so, but the weather is too

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severe and moreover the anniversary of the death of my father will prevent my doing so. I may be able to go down to Saltschub to greet you, etc."

This letter shows clearly that Krochmal did not oppose, but rather encouraged Rapoport to enter upon his duties. *in Prague, though, not in Tarnopol.*

The tumult and the great opposition did not deter Rapoport from coming to Tarnopol. On the 10th day of ~~ADG~~ 1838 Perles went to Lemberg to accompany his friend to Tarnopol. On the 15th day of ~~ADG~~ he was welcomed into the city amid great festivities. The sermon which he delivered the following day made a remarkable impression on those who were unbiased and were willing to listen. In it he gave details of his life, of his struggles, and <sup>also</sup> he expressed his desire to cooperate with the various groups of his community. He would have succeeded in allaying the fears of the members of his congregation, he would have succeeded in ingratiating himself ~~wik~~ into the good graces of his community, had he been given the opportunity to do so, and had not the opposition been so severe, for he was of a very sociable temperament and had a good fund of genial humor. Rapoport believed at first that the alarm and noise raised against him were of a temporary nature, and he hoped that in time he would be able to remove all causes for suspicion and harmonize the various factions. But <sup>he</sup> ~~he~~ was sadly disillusioned. The flames of the conflict rose higher and higher by the summer of 1838, they became an all-consuming fire. Continuing their tactics which they pursued previous to his entrance to <sup>e</sup> ~~that~~ city, the men of the opposition propagated documents of insult and slander against Rapoport throughout the city. Goldberg in his Journal Kerem Hemed made light of the tactics, saying that the documents were thrown into the fire, <sup>19</sup> but from a number of letters to his friends, we can see that Rapoport

did not consider them so lightly but was, on the other <sup>contrary</sup> hand, greatly alarmed by them.

The fury against him was especially aggravated by an unfortunate incident. His enemies were wont to assemble in two synagogues, where they would devise means of aggravating and putting Rapoport to shame. Some of Rapoport's friends reported this fact to the authorities, and through a decree of the government, these two synagogues were shut down. This incident coupled with the fact that Rapoport made his headquarters in the <sup>שטוב</sup> <sup>א"ל</sup> of the old Rabbi, raised the fury of his enemies to a higher pitch. They began to pursue more aggressive tactics. Placards were placed on the synagogue with the inscription "Thou shalt utterly loath him". Some otherx pranks were perpetrated upon him in order to disgrace him in the eyes of the public. One Friday evening a <sup>his</sup> ~~man~~ threw an unclean fish into ~~the~~ kitchen and then spread the rumor that the Rabbi was partaking of unclean food.<sup>20</sup> On the morrow, when the rabbi was summoned to make the blessings over the scriptural portion he was astounded to see that the fringes of his <sup>א"ל</sup> <sup>צ</sup> were removed, perpetrated by some worthless rascal, and then some of the spectators began to hiss and cry out, "Don't pay so much attention to the fringes, but pay more attention to the unclean fish eaten in your house." On one Shabuoth night the Rabbi, in accordance with the custom in Judaism, was reciting the liturgical portions of the festival. In order to keep some of the other men awake, he asked the cantor to sing a new song. The cantor, proud of his voice, began to sing louder and louder, and finally attracted the attention of a chassid, who went to the members of his group and informed them that the Rabbi was making merry

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20. Kurlander, S.L. Rapoport, p. 26

and was conducting himself in a rather light and joyous manner. They stoned Rapoport's home and, were it not for the intervention of the police, he would have suffered bodily injury.<sup>21</sup>

Desiring to put an end once for all to the slanders, the advocates of Rapoport succeeded in having the government prosecute the person who wrote the libel. The slanderer was found guilty and the penalty of flogging was imposed upon him. The keen antagonism towards the rabbi was displayed in the fact that the person found guilty submitted gladly to the flogging and the other members of the group who were imprisoned, regarded themselves as martyrs for a holy cause. Matters were becoming very grave. The Fall Holydays were approaching--the two synagogues were as yet closed and the multitude was ~~stoning~~<sup>storming</sup> more and more against the present incumbent. Rapoport saw that something must be done to ~~alleviate~~ allay the wrath of the opposition. He summoned his partisans, suggesting to them that they request the authorities to reopen the synagogues. Some of the extremists maintained that the battle should be fought to the bitter end, and that no compromise should be effected, but the majority concurred with their spiritual leader. They prevailed upon the chief of police to grant them permission to reopen the closed synagogues and to release the prisoners. But the chief of police informed the public that it was against his own wishes, but only through the plea of their rabbi that he sanctioned the reopening of their houses of worship. The storm abated somewhat but not to a great extent.

The objection to Rapoport was based on mistrust, on the vague feeling that he was insincere. From the answer of Perles to one of the more influential members of the opposition, we can see some of the charges which they leveled against the Rabbi. The charge was made that Rapoport's

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21. Kurlander, p. 27

table was covered with all sorts of food and dainties on the ninth day of ~~Ab~~. Another accusation was that the members of his household accepted tickets for the ~~theatre~~ theatre, and that they promenaded and ate in the Jesuit gardens. The charge was also levelled that he uttered words unbecoming a rabbi.<sup>22</sup> Absurd stories as these were believed not only by the rifraff but even by men of culture and of understanding. All these charges emanated, as stated above, from the feeling that he was not sincere in his religious convictions, that his piety was merely a contrivance to delude the public. The statement was made that he should have been a rabbi in Germany, but not in Galicia.

Despite his efforts towards a reconciliation, Rapoport found himself again in trouble. So great was the opposition to him that all those who had their prescription filled at the apothecary of Michael Perles son of Joseph Perles, were banned. The ~~רב~~ refused to circumcise the children of those who sympathized with Rapoport.

Clearly aware of the situation, of the attitude towards him, Rapoport determined to depart as quickly as possible from this "accursed valley". Fortunately, the community of Prague was at this time looking for one, of high intellectual attainment and of great renown to assume the position of ~~רב~~ ~~אב"ד~~ ~~אב"ד~~. Hearing of this opening, Rapoport wrote to one of his most intimate friends, a very influential member in the community of Prague, and requested him to use his influence in having him selected. Rosenthal bent all of his efforts and energies in fulfilling the request of his friend. But there was a great obstacle which threatened to hinder Rapoport from attaining his goal, viz, his relationship with Moses Landau. Moses Landau was the leading Jewish citizen, and it practically devolved upon him to select the candidate for the position of ~~רב~~ ~~אב"ד~~ ~~אב"ד~~. The question was, would Landau recommend one who had bitterly attacked him years ago? Would he bear the grudge or would he be magnanimous enough to overlook this antagonism? It is quite true that peace, on the surface,

at least, had been effected between the two men. Rapoport wrote in 1833 to Luzzatto, "Two scholars of Prague have sent me their books--the name of the second is Moses Landau the author of *מנחת משה*, who has sent me the Pentateuch with German translations and new commentaries. He sent me a letter of greetings despite the fact that I hurt his pride - I sincerely regret for having attacked him."<sup>23</sup> In another letter to Luzzatto he wrote, "Moses Landau has often written me that he has eradicated all symptoms of hatred."<sup>24</sup>

But it is very doubtful whether Moses Landau forgot the deed of Rapoport. The fact that he corresponded with Rapoport and sent him letters of greeting was <sup>most</sup> ~~more~~ likely prompted by business motives. He desired to obtain the good will of this great critic to assure himself that Rapoport would not injure his business by attacking any of his publications. It is very doubtful whether Moses Landau forgot his hatred and antagonism, for his whole attitude clearly shows that he consented to the selection of the Rabbi of Tarnopol, but half-heartedly as if he were compelled to do so. That Moses Landau still harbored a grudge can be seen in a letter <sup>to him</sup> sent by a group of men who advocated the selection of *רבי צבי הירש* to him. They wrote, "With regards to *רבי צבי הירש* we have acted as you have advised us"<sup>25</sup> In another letter they wrote, "*רבי צבי הירש* relying on you to secure the rabbinate for him. Will you spread good report about him? Rapoport is boasting and says, 'I will be the person to be selected'." They also recalled the former injustice done to him by Rapoport. Lending an ear to these statements, Landau wrote to Goldenberg a letter wherein he displayed his displeasure with the rabbi of Tarnopol. Hearing of this, Rapoport wrote a letter to Moses Landau, wherein he stated he was

23. I. Shir, p. 28

24. I Shir p. 105

25. T. Shir, p. 92

astounded to hear that Moses Landau was displeased with him. He saw no reason whatsoever for the recrudescence of this hatred. He had always believed that a truce had been concluded.

But Moses Landau was still not appeased. He could not very well, after his first letter, come out in open battle, but he attempted through all possible means to deprive Rapoport of the rabbinate of Prague. There was a <sup>law</sup> ~~law~~ that a rabbi must be a university graduate, must possess a diploma and Rapoport could surely not fulfill those requirements. The government could and would have overlooked this fact, but Moses Landau seemed to be always emphasizing this deficiency of Rapoport's. The leaders of the Prague congregation, most likely on the instigation of Moses Landau, insisted on investigating into his previous record. Letters were sent to two rabbis, enemies of Rapoport, and, as was expected, the replies were unfavorable. For a little while the hopes of Rapoport were very forlorn. But after a brief period of disappointment, he renewed his efforts in obtaining the rabbinate at Prague. At the request of Rapoport, Rosenthal sent a second letter to Moses Landau, requesting him to deal kindly with his friend and to use his influence in having the government forego the clause which demanded a diploma. All sorts of pressure were brought to bear upon Moses Landau to influence him to select Rapoport. Goldenberg, the editor of the *Renew Herald*, Michael Sachs saw Moses Landau personally and spoke to him about the selection. Finally after great pressure, Rapoport was elected by the members of the community, but the government had not given its sanction. The authorities wanted to know the causes underlying the hatred against Rapoport. While the government was conducting its investigation, the lot of Rapoport became almost unbearable. Luzatto had severed connections because of a little matter<sup>26</sup>. Krochmal, his master had also broken the bonds of friendship, the reason for which we do not know. A number of individuals slandered and maligned Rapoport to Moses <sup>S</sup>ofer in order to have him object to the appointment. But Moses Sofer

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26. I. Shadol p. 615

the great advocate of Jewish learning, did not lend an ear to these attacks, but he, on the other hand, praised and defended him. A certain impetuous young man wrote a virulent attack against Rapoport in order to influence the congregation of Prague to retract from this decision to have the famous biographer as their Rabbi. In it he recalled the letter published in the Kerem Hemed wherein Rapoport had asserted that in many respects the Babylonian Talmud was inferior to the Palestinian Talmud. This young man, Rosenthal by name, was ejected from the city. Rapoport's answer to this virulent attack was not one befitting his dignity. In reply to the attack, he described the slanderer as a passionate youth, one who wishes to attract the attention of the young maidens by his statements. Such an answer does not become a Rabbi in Israel, but when we consider the state of affairs in which he found himself, we can excuse this undignified and puerile reply to the attack.

Before he was informed of his selection, another great sorrow befell the Rabbi of Tarnopol. His friend Perles, who had been his protector throughout the trying days in Tarnopol, died, and some attributed his untimely death to the great tumult which raged in the city against his friend. Rapoport was left without friend or advocate. Fortunately for him, the government finally confirmed his appointment. On the 15th of Cheshvan 1840, Rapoport was informed that he was chosen as  $\text{חכם גדול}$  and not as  $\text{חכם קטן}$  which meant that he would not be given a fixed salary by his congregation, but would be supported by the more wealthier members of his community. They gave him 500 florins a year and his living expenses. Finally he was released from the "cursed valley" of Tarnopol. Although there were many in Prague who opposed him, the opposition did not assume the proportions it did in Tarnopol. On the 14th day of Tammuz he left for Lemberg to recuperate before taking up his duties in Prague.



His literary works in Tarnopol were not of great merit and value. They did not approximate the works he published during his stay in Lemberg. The tumultuous state, the murmuring and rumbling of the mob, stopped the wells of his inspiration. During his entire sojourn at Tarnopol, he did not publish one work of great merit. His entire time was spent in disputations with those who called themselves "חֲסִידֵי חֵלֶם" These men were the editors of the journal 'חֵלֶם', and their policy was not constructive to spread culture, but on the <sup>contrary</sup> other hand, destructive, to reveal the fallacies and errors of the scholars of Israel. Rapoport's works were special marks of their darts of criticism. Not only did they direct their attack against his works but against him personally. They constituted the group of men who attempted to persuade Moses Landau to reject Rapoport and select

אליהו ליפשיץ. Rapoport spent his time in refuting the charges of these men, and it must be admitted he was justified in his refutations. On a number of occasions Rapoport overstepped the bounds of gentlemanliness, he oftentimes became too bitter in his denunciations. But this must be attributed to the woeful state in which <sup>he</sup> he was situated. But as soon as he was informed of his selection, the wells of inspiration surged up again. It was the old Rapoport resurrected. In 1840 he published an article on "the Chazars, on the lost ten tribes and the Karaites." He refuted the claims of the Karaites in which many of the sages of Israel believed, that the Chazars were converted to Karaitism. In this article he threw light on many other matters. The scholars began to sing again his praises.<sup>26</sup> This article regained for him the lost friendship of Luzatto. <sup>27</sup>

Rapoport left Tarnopol for his native city Lemberg, there to regain his strength to enable him to fulfill properly his rabbinical duties at Prague. Moses Landau still displayed his antagonism by only sending him 300 florins, an insufficient sum for his journey. But before he departed from his homeland, Krochmal, with whom he had renewed friendship, passed away. In the eulogy over his master, Rapoport told of his daily journeys to the city of his teacher, of their conversations, and he also stated that he was not responsible for the estrangement which took place between Krochmal and himself. 28

The reception which Rapoport received in Prague was very elaborate, and by far more cordial than the one he received on his entrance into Tarnopol. His majestic appearance, his powerful physique impressed all the spectators. His sermon on the following Sabbath made a profound impression upon the auditors. <sup>Yellinek</sup> Yellinek, who was among the audience and who was then just about 19 years old, tells us of the profound impression his sermon made. There was a Talmudic scholar who put various questions to him, to test his Talmudic knowledge. Rapoport answered the questions put to him humbly and satisfactorily, thereby gaining the respect and admiration of all. The people in Prague were not interested so much in his preaching but in his policies. They were eager to know whether he would be influenced by the new trend of thought and initiate reforms or would he abide by the old. He allayed all suspicions by pursuing the policy of retaining the old. Despite his great researches, Rapoport was not regarded, with the exception of a few <sup>אבות</sup> אבות, by the people of Prague as a great scholar. It was characteristic of the community of Prague to believe that all its members were cultured. But in the latter years of his life, Rapoport was finally recognized as a great scholar in Prague, and he was given the title of <sup>הרב</sup> הרב. Though they were still some

who were dissatisfied with him, Rapoport spent the rest of his days happily in Prague. In 1847 the government permitted the congregation to pay their rabbi a fixed salary of 600 florins a year.

Rapoport's coming to Prague may have insured his material happiness but it marked the period of decline in his cultural life. In his eulogy over Rapoport, Steinschneider makes the statement that Prague was the burial ground of the literary activity of Rapoport.<sup>29</sup> We may not concur with Steinschneider entirely, but we must admit that, as far as his cultural life is concerned, it is on the downward path. Many reasons can be given to account for this sad fact. His activity in the congregation prevented him from producing works of monumental worth. In a letter to Luzatto he informed him that he had been sadly disillusioned. He had hoped that the Rabbinate would have given him time and leisure to do research, but to his great disappointment, he had discovered that all of his spare moments were taken up with congregational matters.<sup>30</sup> In addition to this fact, people took advantage of his sociable disposition. They came to his abode, to obtain advice or to discuss subjects of a cultural nature. He would listen patiently to all of the new-fangled ideas and news of the young men. All of this consumed the precious moments which he desired to spend in digging up the treasures of the past. His wife attempted to help him by turning away visitors or by seeing to it that the visits were not too long of duration. But she died in 1843, leaving him a prey to visitors. The nobility of Rapoport is displayed when he

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29. T. Shir p. 106

30. I. Shir. p. 216



introduction by Rapoport

This could be used <sup>to-day</sup> to good advantage by those who investigate the cultural development of our people in various lands. An introduction by Rapoport to the "W'JITD P W'JIX D N'VIB" was published in 1848. In it he engaged in a virulent attack against the Reform wing of Jewry. In 1848 the <sup>"N'GIB N'KIB"</sup> ~~W'JITD P W'JIX D N'VIB~~ by Rapoport was published, an open letter to the conference convening at Frankfort. He attempted to dissuade them from travelling on the new path of reform. Although containing some valuable notes and suggestions and remarks, the book as a whole falls below the standard. He engaged too much in irony and not enough in arguments.

In 1852 Rapoport finally published the first volume of his 70<sup>th</sup> which ~~was~~ all of Israel had been eagerly looking forward to, and which men like Fürst said would never appear. Luzatto wrote a poem in commemoration of this great occasion. Despite the great encyclopedic knowledge revealed in the work, it was very disappointing and displayed signs of <sup>sensibility</sup> servility. Had Rapoport directed his energies to this work during his youth, when his strength and genius were not sapped by congregational matters, he might have contributed a very valuable encyclopedia to Judaism.

On the 19th day of | 1. 10. 1860, Rapoport celebrated his 70th birthday. The Jews of Prague, on that occasion payed homage to their teacher and leader. Letters of felicitation and congratulations were sent from the Breslau seminary, London, Venice and from all parts of the world. All of the Hebrew periodicals paid due attention to this occasion.

His literary activity did not cease even after he had attained the "three score and ten". He wrote the "אור חור" which was published in החור after his death. In the אור חור he attacked the views of Geiger as expressed in his "Uroschrift" and declared that they were heretical and destructive. In the latter years of his life he wrote

MSX/ 435 "11" a defense of Zecharias Frankel against the denunciation

of Samson Raphael Hirsch. Rapoport spent the latter years of his life in a continual battle with the extremists, with the ultra orthodox and with the Reform.

Rapoport died on the 19th day of Tishri, 1868. The whole city of Prague mourned its great loss. All of the Jews paid their last respects to the renowned investigator and critic. Eulogies were given in various parts of the world. Even Geiger, whom Rapoport had attacked, lauded and praised this enemy of Reform.

Rapoport with his broad shoulders and powerful physique was of imposing appearance. Bernfeld writes of him "When he walked through the streets he had the appearance of a man of God. I can see him wrapped in his <sup>א'ו'ו</sup> wearing a turban, dressed in his best clothes, walking from the synagogue to his home. Rapoport was one of the pupils of Aaron, loving peace and bringing men closer to the Torah."<sup>33</sup>

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33. T. Shir, p. 131

## CHAPTER II

### RAPOPORT'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS ORTHODOXY

Throughout the entire course of his life, Rapoport found himself in a peculiar condition, in the same state of affairs in which Spencer was situated. When the question of the value of Spencer's research in the field of biology was put to biologists they replied that his work in this realm was of little importance but his philosophic dissertations were monumental. When the philosophers were asked about his merit in metaphysics they replied that his books in philosophy were of no value whatsoever, but his strength lay in biology. The same was applicable to Rapoport. The ultra-orthodox regarded him as a Reformer, and on the other hand, the Reform wing regarded his acts and tendencies as those of one belonging to the Orthodox camp. But Rapoport cannot be classified as Orthodox or Reform. He was a Jew belonging to the Zechariah Frankel classification, traveling always the middle road. His whole life was a battle against the two extremes--ultra orthodoxy on the one hand and radical reform on the other. His son stated well the course of his life. He wrote "Will you not see in these two letters (referring to אורח חיים ו אורח חיים) that there was no change in the views of my father, blessed be his memory, during his whole lifetime. The same spirit that animated him in his youth animated him in his old age. One thread runs through all of his letters, researches and sermons, namely, the love of truth; with the flag of truth he fought against the indifferent (referring to the ultra-orthodox)<sup>34</sup> who say that nothing matters, and with the banner of truth he thundered against those who deemed themselves wise who said "There is no Torah". Against these two extremes my father fought with all his heart and with all his soul."

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34. Nachalath Yehuda p. ~~III~~ <sup>IX</sup>

\*\*\* Note: I cannot understand the reason for designating the ultra-orthodox as indifferent.

Rapoport's attitude towards orthodoxy is very well disclosed in the controversy he had with Luzatto. One must admit, no matter what one's feelings may be in the whole discussion that the dispute revolved itself around the question which was then confronting the Jewish world, viz, Orthodoxy as <sup>6</sup> opposed to Reform.

Before going into the dispute, an account of the relationship between Rapoport and Luzatto would be in place. In 1829 when Luzatto became aware of the remarkable acumen and profound critical ability of Rapoport, displayed in the "תורת משה" <sup>35</sup> he longed to make his acquaintance and wrote a letter to that effect to Rapoport. Rapoport was overjoyed to hear that a scholar of the same of Luzatto should seek his friendship. Despite the differences in temperament, despite the differences in religious views, despite the intolerant nature of Luzatto their friendship continued until 1839. When one reads the letters which they exchanged with each other, one ~~must~~ must admire the patience of Rapoport during these ten years. A person of less patience would have severed connections, but Rapoport overlooked the insults heaped upon him by his friend for the sake of peace. In the summer of 1839 when the 4th volume of Kerem Hemed was published the break occurred. There appeared in the Kerem Hemed a poem composed by Luzatto in commemoration of the selection of Rapoport as Rabbi of Tarnopol, and also some remarks by Rapoport to an article written by Luzatto. This enkindled the wrath of Luzatto and on the first of Iyar he sent a letter, wherein he announced the severing of the ties of friendship. In it he upbraided Rapoport for having published his poem without his consent, and for commenting on his article without first submitting his comments to him. <sup>36</sup> But unbiased investigation will clearly show that Luzatto did grant Rapoport permission to publish the poem. <sup>37</sup> Then Luzatto went literally on a rampage; he knew no bounds. He began to

35. I. Shadal p. 165

36. T. Shir Shadal p. 615

37. T. Shir p. 62



write letters to his friends denouncing Rapoport and characterized the works of Rapoport as lies.<sup>38</sup> His whole conduct was disgraceful and unbecoming, especially when we recall the fact that Rapoport was then surrounded on all sides by trouble and tribulation. But after reading Rapoport's article on the "Chazars and the Karaites," Luzatto in 1851 renewed his friendship and apologized for his conduct.

The first dispute which arose in the very early days of their friendship and which displayed the differences in their religious views, was over Rapoport's relationship to Jost - Luzatto rebuked Rapoport for continuing his associations with an individual who did not believe in the divine origin of the Bible, nor in the divine inspiration of the prophets. He wrote in one of his letters, "I hate and detest Jost. I sincerely believe there is no one so despicable as one who overthrows the fundamentals of faith, without which men would annihilate each other. Shall I consider that person, who writes the history of our people, from the time of its Exodus to the Hasmonean period, to prove that the Torah is a collection of manuscripts written at various stages, and of times contradicting each other--shall I regard that person as a friend of my people? For whose benefit and did he publish these volumes? Was it not to point out to the Gentiles that he is forsaking the faith of his fathers? Is such a man a seeker after truth? No, my friend, no, neither the love of truth nor the love of Israel is in the heart of that man. I can see that he is a man of unclean lips, and therefore I detest him. When I see such an individual engaged in apologetics for his peoples I say unto him "take the good that you intend to bestow and throw it away," for the injury done by him is greater than any good that he could perform. The enemies of Israel only aided in strengthening the bond of Israel but the traitors and agnostics

were responsible for the great deflections from the <sup>camp</sup> camps of Israel. Such an individual is Jost. I will detest him."<sup>39</sup>

Rapoport who was more liberal in his tendencies replied that he could see no reason whatsoever in breaking off relationship with Jost, who was a profound scholar and who fought for the welfare of Israel. He, like Rabbi Meir of old, would eat the food, the better part of what Jost had to offer, and would throw away the kernel, and he hoped that even the kernel would become palatable in time. He could see no reason for the quarrel. All scholars have one goal after all, even though each may select a different path to attain it.<sup>40</sup>

Luzatto was aroused to a great frenzy by this "liberal" reply. He wrote "Woe unto me that you select and sympathize with the enemy. Were you to weigh him on the balances, he would descend extremely low, and Samuel David Luzatto would ascend very high. One thing I ask of you. If you desire to greet me, do not greet me with the title friend or sage, for if Jost is a sage and a wise man, then I undoubtedly am a foolish person, who believes in foolish things. I will continue to be your friend, but my heart will weep secretly."<sup>41</sup> When Rapoport still refused to do the bidding of the great poet, Luzatto wrote that he went out in open battle against Jost because he wished to destroy the impression that Jost was speaking in the name of Judaism, that his view represented the views of world Jewry.<sup>42</sup> The wrath of Luzatto gradually abated and finally he wrote to Rapoport that he did not wish to see Rapoport break off relations and display aversion towards Jost, but as for himself, he will always revile him.<sup>43</sup> It was but a few years later, that Luzatto joined hands with Jost in attacking and denouncing Rapoport when he was located in the "cursed valley" of Tarnopol.

During the whole controversy, Rapoport did not foam or rage or piously speak in the name of Judaism, but displayed a liberal attitude. He did not declaim against those who differed with him, but asserted that

everyone has the God-given right to travel undisturbed his own path of thought. In one of his letters he wrote to that effect, "You were grieved to hear that I considered doubt a good quality, a beautiful flower. I cannot understand your grief at my statement. Is there a tribunal to determine what a man should think or say, <sup>or</sup> ~~at~~ to prevent him from doubting? We cannot allay doubts by force. What can the person who is in doubt do, but pray to the Eternal to clear away the mists of his doubts. No other method is effective. We cannot remove the misgivings of a man's heart by battling with him. Let every man walk in the name of his God, and we will walk in the name of our God." <sup>44</sup> These words reveal a very liberal tendency.

Another controversial matter which threatened to sever the bonds of friendship and which revealed Rapoport's attitude toward ultra-orthodoxy was that of the authorship of the 2nd book of Isaiah. Rapoport believed that the 2nd part of Isaiah, from chapter 40 to the end was written by one who witnessed the restoration of the Holy Land to Israel, but Luzatto on the other hand, maintained that the prophecies were delivered by the Isaiah who flourished during the reign of Hezekiah and that all views contrary were heretical. Luzatto wrote to this effect: "The agnostics have maintained for the last 50 years that the prophecies in Isaiah depicting future events were not written by Isaiah but were written towards the end of the exile. I hear that you also are of the opinion that they were written towards the end of the exile. Let me have your views." <sup>45</sup> Rapoport replied: "I cannot understand why you brand all those who maintain that chapters 40 to the end were not written by Isaiah I as disbelievers. I cannot comprehend your anger. Is there any statement to the effect that the whole of Isaiah was written by the 1st Isaiah? Is it a dogma of faith to believe that they were the work of one man, because they are all included in one collection and in one book? Then to follow the same reasoning, one must

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44. I Shir. p. 21

45. I Shadal p. 216

believe that all the Psalms were written by David, and that all the proverbs were composed by Solomon, which even you deny. No, the fact that they are included in <sup>the</sup> ~~a~~ book does not prove that they are the work of one author. The internal evidence, the fact that the incidents related ~~with~~ <sup>in</sup> the second part are entirely different from those narrated in the first part, proves conclusively that they emanated from two distinct prophets. We ~~xx~~ can account for the inclusion of the two books under one collection. Chapters 40 and on were written by an individual whose name was also Isaiah, and who preached during the exile. But later generations forgot this fact and affixed his prophecies to the Isaiah of Hezekiah's regime."<sup>46</sup>

Luzatto replied that if Rapoport did not wish to quarrel with him over a matter which he deemed a ~~חילוק~~ <sup>חילוק</sup> let Rapoport point out to him that there was nothing in his theory which would destroy faith. "Show me," Luzatto wrote, "that it was a false prophet in Babylon who wrote these prophecies, knowing that the predictions were being made of events close at hand and trying to delude the people to have them believe that these prophecies were delivered ~~in~~ a long time before their occurrence."<sup>47</sup>

Rapoport answered that his view did not destroy or undermine the fundamentals of Judaism. It was untrue that the prophet was flying under false colors, trying to give the impression that he was predicting events long before their actual occurrence. He asked "where did you get this impression?" The prophet is not predicting future events, but is concerning himself with comforting the people, endeavoring to persuade the populace to return to Palestine. The whole contents prove conclusively that the prophet is living at the very moment of the events he narrates.<sup>48</sup>

Luzatto remained obdurate and could not be swerved from his original opinion. He replied "I have found your view full of subtle arguments,

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46. I. Shir p. 223 and 224

47. I. Shadal p. 226

48. I. Shir p. 235

but I have found no proof whatsoever to make me depart from my faith and the faith of my fathers. I will give you a proof for my thesis. The exultant and exuberant tone proves conclusively that the chapters were written during a period when <sup>Small</sup>~~Isaiah~~ was independent and free. Had they been composed during the exile, the tone would have been humble and sad as the prophecies of Haggai and <sup>Ze</sup>~~Z~~echariah."49

To this Rapoport replied: "You write, furthermore that you have not found a proof to cause you to depart from your faith and the faith of your fathers. The word 'my faith' was well chosen, for I have found that it is impossible for you to change your views and conclusions. But as to what you add from the faith of your fathers, I take objection to that. I seriously doubt whether my fathers or your fathers regarded the matter, viz, the time of composition of the "Book of Comfort" as an article of faith. And let us admit, for argument's sake, that it was an article of faith to them--why do you dread it so much and why are you not afraid to say concerning the book of Koheleth that it is not the work of Solomon, even tho the name of the author and the name of his father are given? And moreover, the sages ascribe the book to him; and because of the contradictions they ask "where are you Solomon, where is your wisdom; they make the explicit statement that Solomon wrote 3 books - Psalms, Song of Songs and Koheleth. In another place they put the time of the composition later and said that Hezekiah and his group wrote it. And you who undoubtedly placed the date of Koheleth later than the generation of Hezekiah, why do you refuse to do so with the "Book of Comfort"? And I will answer your question regarding the difference in style between this book and that

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49. I Shadal p. 234 and 235

*Zechariah*

of Haggai and <sup>Ze</sup>chariah. In the first place, we have but few of the prophecies of Haggai and <sup>Ze</sup>chariah. In the second place we have many Psalms which date from the exilic period and you yourself admit that the "on the rivers of Babylon" psalms are late. All these Psalms, tho of the exilic period are characterized by joyfulness, happiness and exuberant phrases. The same is true of this book. There is internal evidence that the book could not have been written by the Isaiah of Hezekiah's reign. A reference is made to <sup>u</sup>eunuchs in the 4th verse of chapter 56. It is impossible that the practise of eunuchs existed in the days of the 1st Isaiah, for the prophets would have surely denounced such an infamous practice. The eunuchs were first imported on a great scale by the Persians who required them for their harems. The princes of Isaiah brought some of the eunuchs with them to Palestine. And furthermore the sentence (chap 49 v. 7) "Kings will see him and princes will rise and bow down" cannot refer to the prophet, but must of necessity refer to one living in exile. The prophet, moreover, describes himself as "one despised by men and the servant of rulers" (chap 49 v 7) which can be applied only to one living in the exile and not to the first Isaiah of whom we are never told that he was ridiculed and despised. In addition to this we have a difference in style between the two prophets. There is the continual repetition of certain words as *בן דוד* etc--a peculiarity found in the Persian language. We have certain words which reveal a later origin; such words as *דָּרָוֹן* (chap 55 v. 13); *דָּרָוֹן* (chap 49 v. 22); and *דָּרָוֹן* -Darawon, surely of a Persian origin, etc."

Luzatto finally put an end to the whole controversy by saying he would return to it after 3 years. We can see Rapoport's reaction to extreme orthodoxy in this dispute over the authorship of chapters 40 until the end of the book of Isaiah.

Another point of difference which led to the breaking off of

their friendly relations was their attitude towards Ibn Ezra. One must also regard the issue involved here as one of orthodoxy as opposed to a more liberal policy, for Ibn Ezra was always regarded by the ultra<sup>with</sup> suspicion. Rapoport wrote to Luzatto as follows: "You have attacked Ibn Ezra because he ventured to say that chapters 40 of Isaiah until the end were not written by the Isaiah of pre-exilic times. I regret my step in having brought him in to bolster up my arguments. I am grieved to hear that you are preparing to wage battle against the sage of Israel, the beloved of my heart. You compare Ibn Ezra to Rashi, thereby attempting to lower Ibn Ezra in my estimation and to raise Rashi in my eyes. Why do you make these comparisons? Both are great in their respective fields. Why do you attack him because you have discovered some flaws in his works? He is but human and hence is liable to err in certain conclusions. Why do you go out to meet him with the sword of faith? Have you not found in all of his works that he is a Jew with all his heart and soul, and also a very religious person? His poems, songs and commentaries reveal a lofty soul, gazing heavenwards towards the eternal. You say furthermore that he arrives at hasty conclusions, without first penetrating deeply into matters. How can you make these statements concerning one who is very profound in his research, one who weighs his statements more than any other investigator in Israel? I say that his theories, excepting those of astrology, have not as yet been comprehended in their entirety. He will be understood only by later generations. He surpasses Maimonides in the realm of philosophy, for he traveled on a new path untrodden by others. He was the first one not to follow the old beaten path, the path of Aristotle. In this respect he resembled Abraham of old. Just as our patriarch Abraham did not walk on the road of his ancestors, but unwaveringly struck out for himself and discovered the hidden treasures of

wisdom, so did Abraham ibn Ezra travel on new pathways and discover new treasures. Our patriarch Abraham and Abraham ibn Ezra resemble each other in another respect, namely both were wanderers, and at each stopping place they called on the name of the Lord. That is precisely the meaning of the phrase "From Abraham to Abraham there arose no one like Abraham." Does he not always attempt to search out new paths in his commentaries? But he does not care to reveal his views, but only <sup>to</sup> ~~for~~ a few. What did you mean by the statement "that he was hypocritical"? Is it because he refused to proclaim his views from the housetops? No, I think his actions were proper in not disclosing his theories to the world, but only to a few. The sages in Israel have always practised this custom, of revealing their secrets but to a few of their pupils."<sup>50</sup>

Luzatto replied by bringing grave charges against Ibn Ezra. "Will you choose such a man," Luzatto wrote, "who is two-faced, one who says that the book of Rabbi <sup>לוי</sup> ~~deserves~~ to be bound because it contains statements to the effect that there are errors and mistakes in the Bible, when he himself is a sinner in this respect, when he himself begins to "destroy the fence" by hinting that there are verses of a later origin which were added to the Pentateuch. Moreover he says on every page that the view of the Rabbis is too deep for us, but tradition decides so and so, and then he himself permits the eating of fat, which the Rabbis have forbidden. What will you say in regard to his views on the <sup>לוי</sup> ~~deserves~~ ? Can he believe in the divine origin of the Bible when he maintains that the priest placed poison in the cup? Of what use has he been and what good has he done for his people? The foolish ones remained within their foolishness and regarded him as a saint and a man of mystery, and the so-called

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50. I Shir p. 253, 254, 255.



philosophers learned through him to break away from the faith of their fathers. We would have had proper methods of exegesis, had it not been for Ibn Ezra and Maimonides and their like, who regarded the Torah as full of allegories and similes. They were responsible for the rise of the Kabbalistic movement, for they pointed out the way to them..how to interpret the Pentateuch in allegorical fashion and how to twist texts. In their <sup>day</sup> work the decline of the wisdom of Israel started. Ibn Ezra, who studied all the sciences, did not write one subject clearly and coherently, but jumped from one subject to another. Is this not a sign of a confused mind, of a restless spirit? Is such a man not subject to the whims of the hour, and are not his views obtained through first impressions? His books on "פירוש חומש" were written neither clearly nor are they well balanced."<sup>51</sup> *ענין חומש*

"You write," Rapoport replied, "that Ibn Ezra is two-faced, that he cries out against the book of *פירוש חומש* because it contains the statement that there are corrupt words in the Bible, when he himself is guilty of the same offence. Ibn Ezra did not make this statement of the the great grammarian but of *הרב רבינו גרשון*. Ibn Ezra was justified in denouncing his book, because through it the Torah becomes like a city without walls. He reads into the Scriptures many mistakes which are not contained therein. He is literally reducing the Torah to a forgery. As to Ibn Ezra's view of the additional verses, with which I do not agree, he can justify himself by claiming that he follows the opinion of Rabbi Jehuda and <sup>not</sup> pay no attention to Rabbi Simeon, who said 'is it possible that the Torah lacked one letter.' Coming to the matter of the bitter waters, I am greatly surprised at you that you attribute the statement that the priest placed poison in the cup, to him. Whoever holds such an opinion is

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51. I Shadal p. 232 and 233.

not only wicked but insane as well. It is impossible for any law giver, be he of the denizens of the wilderness, to slowly kill a woman and to delude her and the spectators. There is no doubt therefore, that he meant that some bitter substance was placed in the waters, the function of which was to pain the taste and the inward part of the person drinking it. This, added to the power of her imagination when she knows her guilt and hears the curse of the priest, will cause death. But if she is free from all guilt, this will give her strength and ward off evil. This is precisely the meaning of Ibn Ezra. He is not the only one to hold such views but all of the sages of Israel who lived among the Arabs tried to explain the miracles in a natural way. Some of these said that the serpent and the ass did not speak. Will you wage battle against these sages as well? You say, furthermore that Ibn Ezra did not write anything coherently and <sup>clearly</sup> ~~cleatly~~, that his books of grammar were written "without clarity and without balance." It is <sup>an</sup> easy matter for you, sitting peacefully in your house and resting in your home to attack one who was a continual wanderer, one crushed by poverty. In ~~speaking~~ spite of this, who cannot marvel at the clarity of his language and the beauty of his thought revealed not only in his poems but even in his commentaries and books of grammar. Not a superfluous word is to be found. I have always valued his works highly, and so would any unbiased seeker after truth. But you hate him. Woe be to the ordinary man who enkindles your wrath. But Ibn Ezra is above our estimation and judgment."<sup>52</sup>

To this Luzatto answered arrogantly, "In my opinion Ibn Ezra although honored by Israel, is merely a fraud and I believe that to praise

him will cause great injury. I have seen that you differed with me in this matter a long time, for which my heart pains me. I see also that no one is of my opinion, for all are clinging to the imaginery (referring to Ibn Ezra) and casting truth behind them. What can I do but cry out "I alone have remained a prophet unto the Eternal".<sup>53</sup>

The answer to this arrogant outcry of Luzatto's was as follows:

"When it concerns Ibn Ezra, I say "who am I and who are you before that great mountain, not only in cultural matters, but also in manners and conduct through which men find grace in the eyes of God and man. In all of these we ~~men~~ are but grasshoppers compared with that giant. Go and investigate in his works and see if you can find even one word of self glorification as found in your last letter. You will not <sup>find the</sup> statements "I am greater than my contemporaries, I alone am a prophet to the Eternal, and the others are but pursuing the imaginery." Meekness and humility characterize all of his works. You also say of Ibn Ezra "that he was honored by Israel and by man - in my eyes he is merely an imagination and a shadow - and to relate his praises will be injurious". I see two realities and one shadow, not like the shadow of a wall but the shadow of a fleeting bird, when you direct your gaze toward it, it is no more. The story of the merit of the great men in Israel, among whom Ibn Ezra must be included, is eternal and you cannot destroy it. There is a blessing in it, for students will learn to penetrate deeply into religious matters and the explanation of Scripture. Your statement as to Ibn Ezra's opinion of the additional verses in the Pentateuch does not lower him in my estimation. We have a Baraitha to the same effect. The Baraitha reads "Joshua wrote his own book and 8 verses of the Pentateuch."<sup>54</sup>

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53. I. Shadal p. 246

54. I Shir. p. 21, 22, and 26

Maimonides, was also the target for Luzatto's remarks. He maintained that Maimonides wrought great havoc to Israel by bringing in Greek influence through Aristotle, to Judaism, that his attempt to harmonize Judaism with Aristotelian philosophy was not only futile but injurious. Rappoport displayed his liberalism by replying, "Do you think that Judaism could exist secluded without taking something from other peoples? I see in our dispersion the hand of God, to have us imbibe from the various nations the best they have to offer. Even the Rabbis assimilated some of the ideas and ideals of the Greeks. It is true that Judaism is superior to Hellenism, but Judaism could not have persisted by itself."<sup>55</sup> Maimonides in Rapoport's opinion performed a noble service for Judaism by trying to harmonize Judaism with Aristotilian philosophy, for it should be the duty of every sage to correlate Judaism with the culture of his day.

Throughout the controversy with Luzatto, one can detect the liberal note struck by Rappoport.

We can see clearly the utter aversion of Rapoport towards fanaticism and ultra orthodoxy, in his defense of Zachariah Frankel. Not only did he detest it during his early manhood, but even when he attained the rabbinate in Prague he fought against it with all his might and main. Frankel was the most eminent member of historical Judaism, which advocated freedom of research while in practical life upheld tradition. As the man of the golden mean Frankel was chosen president of the Breslau seminary. Samson Raphael Hirsch addressed immediately an open letter to Frankel, demanding a statement as to the religious principles which would guide the instruction at the new institution. Frankel ignored the letter. When the fourth volume of Graetz appeared, the orthodoxy of the new institution was impeached. The attacks against Frankel became more systematic when he, that is Frankel, ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ published his Hebrew introduction to the Mishnas. The first attack began with the letter of Gottlieb Fischer, published in Hirsch's Jeshurun of 1860. Hirsch himself began in the following

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55.1 Shir p. 108

year a series of articles, in which he took exception to some of Frankel's statements, especially to his definition of Rabbinical tradition. Rapoport wrote a book "חובת הלב" in defence of Frankel. He rebuked Hirsch for having published his attacks in German. Rapoport asks him "what prevented him from writing such a vile polemic in Hebrew, which Jews alone would understand? The Philistines will rejoice, and the uncircumcised will be exultant that they have found another occasion to slander the Jews."<sup>56</sup> In this work he proved conclusively that the views of Frankel with regard to the Oral law were not heretical but were based on the foundations of true belief. He also justified Frankel's ~~silence~~ <sup>silence</sup> as to the principle which would guide his institution. He maintained that the institution was erected for study and not for controversial matters, and whosoever wished to drink of the wells of learning, was permitted to do so. The very fact that the graduates of the Seminary were loyal Jews and God-fearing men proved conclusively that the institution was not turning out men who would betray the cause of Judaism."<sup>57</sup> The dispute did not end at this juncture but continued to plague Rapoport. The followers of Hirsch took up cudgels for him and attacked Rapoport severely for his defence of ~~Frank~~ Frankel. Rapoport, who undoubtedly detested this new German orthodoxy characterized the followers of Hirsch as "men of lies, who speak falsehood."<sup>58</sup>

Rapoport's attitude towards fanaticism is very well illustrated by the following incident. A Jew in the city of Prague failed to circumcise his son, which aroused the wrath of the fanatics. One of them came to Rapoport and urged him to compel this Jew by the power of the law to circumcise his son. Rapoport refused to do so, saying that he did not want to use force in matters of religion. "But a certain Rabbi advised us

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56. Divre Sholom Voemeth, p. 1

57. Divre Sholom Voemeth, p. 18

58. Harnagid, p. 193

*Harnagid*

to act in this manner," the extremist replied. "Well, that Rabbi will cause him to forsake the faith of his fathers," Rapoport answered. The affair resulted as Rapoport had predicted. When the followers of fanaticism invoked the law to compel him to circumcise his son, the Jew, in order to rid himself of them, left his faith and was converted.<sup>59</sup>

The persecutions that characterized the first part of his life must be attributed to the aversion he displayed towards ultra-orthodoxy.

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59. Kurlander, S.L. Rapoport, p. 16

# CHAPTER III

## RAPOPORT'S ATTITUDE TOWARD REFORM

Altho he detested ultra orthodoxy and utterly despised Hassidism, believing it to consist of rank foolishness and not containing one particle of truth, Rapoport was not attracted and enthralled by the reforms emanating from Germany. Although he displayed as a youth a liberal tendency, corresponding with Jost and characterizing him as "that great investigator who has revealed the secret of the past ages"<sup>60</sup> and despite the fact that he exchanged letters with Geiger the great heretic in the eyes of the orthodox, and served as a member of the editorial board of the "Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift für Jüdische Theologie," Rapoport in practice at least remained conservative and never traveled the road of radical Reform. In his early manhood his aversion to those intellectuals who scrutinize the sayings and opinions of the sages only for the purposes of finding support for their radical views, was disclosed in his introduction to his הנהגותיו where he stated the purpose of his work was to "shut up once for all the mouths of those who speak infamous things, whose wisdom consists in ridiculing the sages," this attack being directed against Judah Mises, who had been his friend and who had landed him in his work הנהגותיו. His refusal to follow in their footsteps aroused the fury of the advocates of Reform as we are informed by a letter sent to Luzatto. "Then those who deemed themselves wise, arrogant youths, <sup>came</sup> and devise schemes against me because I refused to walk in the path, upon which they were traveling.

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60. T. Shir p. 21

They despised me and put me to shame even before people of the lowest strata. But I detested them and refused to depart, heaven forbid, from the Torah."<sup>61</sup>

When Rapoport began to attain the age of fifty, somewhat of a reaction took place in his life; he became more and more conservative and began to lose the liberalism of his youth. He threatened in 1836 to sever his connection with the Kerem Hemed because Goldberg published some of the controversies which הרמח"ם had with the rabbis of his generation. In 1838 in a letter to the community of Krotoschin he announced his withdrawal from the "Zeitschrift". It read as follows: "My ways are far from those who wish to tear down the laws of Judaism which must eventually lead to the destruction of the whole structure of Judaism. I wrote to this effect to Abraham Geiger. He is a cultured gentleman and it pains me to see him depart from the path traveled by Maimonides and the sages of all ages...he placed my name in the list of editors without asking my permission. As soon as I found out his purpose I asked him to remove my name from the list but he did not comply with my request. Therefore I withdrew all my contributions and was compelled to inform the public that I no longer participate<sup>y</sup> in the work of the Zeitschrift."<sup>62</sup> Geiger justly denounced him for this act and also proved that the facts as given by Rapoport were false. Geiger wrote in his Zeitschrift, "I want to explain the absence of Rapoport's name from the list of our editors. I am compelled to give publicity to this matter since Rapoport has not remained true and loyal in his relations to me and to this paper. When I was selected as editor in chief of this journal, I wrote to

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61. T. Shir, p. 38

62. Abraham Geiger - Leben und Lebenswerk, p. 58~~5~~ and 59



Rapoport asking him to contribute articles. He received my suggestion with joy, sending me a number of articles for publication. In 1837 when he was endeavoring to obtain the rabbinate at Tarnopol, he wrote me, criticizing the tendencies and views of the paper and also maintained that in case the tendency was not altered, he would be compelled to disassociate himself from the journal. I replied, informing him that we would view his resignation with keen regret and would appreciate further communication. I received no letter from him since then, but nevertheless, I did not remove his name from the list of editors. It was to my great amazement and astonishment that I received news of his letter to Krotoschin, in which he attacked me and announced the breaking off of all relations with the "Zeitschrift". From our correspondence one can easily see that his statements that his name was placed on the board of editors without his permission and furthermore that he wrote to us requesting us to publish in the Zeitschrift his resignation, which we refused, are entirely untrue."<sup>63</sup>

This letter of Rapoport's to the community of Krotoschin was utilized by the enemies of Geiger to slander him before the governmental officials to prevent his attainment of the Rabbinate of <sup>B</sup>reslau. Rapoport regretted having injured Geiger. When Rapoport assumed his rabbinical duties at Prague in 1840 he was compelled to face the issue which was then confronting the Jewish world. Would he be influenced by the tendencies of the time, or would he cling to the old? He allayed the suspicions of the conservatives by remaining steadfast to traditions and he characterized the work of the reformers as "abominations which are now <sup>being done</sup> in Israel". He characterized the leaders as misleaders of the people, who cause the people to go astray

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63. Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift für jüdische Theologie, vol 4 p. 472-475

who say they have no share in the Talmud and in the law of Moses.<sup>64</sup> He also attacked Jost with whom he had become/stranged, for his views on Rabbi Jehuda Hanasi, and characterized him as one who "destroys and uproots"<sup>65</sup> In this dispute with Jost, one must decide in favor of Rapoport.

Rapoport's utter hatred of reform is displayed in his attitude towards the rabbinical convention held at Frankfurt. A number of rabbis of more liberal tendencies were assembled at Frankfurt to suggest reforms which would save decadent Judaism. The first motion brought forward to dispense with Hebrew in the liturgy, obliged <sup>^</sup>Zacharia<sup>^</sup> Frankel who was one of the Rabbis present, to sever<sup>^</sup> his connections with the assembly. Rapoport determined to write an open letter to the assembly, to dissuade them from the path they were traveling, which he believed would lead to the brink of destruction. But previous to the letter to the assembly, he dispatched to Jost, with whom he had renewed friendly relations, a letter in which he wrote, "I am glad to hear that you are about to publish a history of Israel. I hope that you will express yourself concerning the new sects which are arising in Israel, also concerning those individuals who call themselves Rabbis. I hope that you will not spare these men for the injuries they are inflicting upon our people. Woe be unto us, for they are breaking a small people into pieces. They shatter us even as the potter dashes the vessel into pieces. Luther divided a large and mighty people and even now the wounds have not healed as yet. But these wish to scatter a small flock, which has already been dispersed and which has no shepherd, a people small in numbers, whose glory has consisted in surviving until this day, and who has performed miraculous deeds by its inner spiritual power.

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64. I Shir p. 136

65 I Shir p. 106

When did Luther arise to bring about a reformation? It was when he found fault with the priests. But what have the leaders of Israel done? These innovators are merely causing strife and struggle in Israel. This struggle will delay the progress of Israel on the journey of history. This <sup>S</sup>dis~~si~~sension will also damage us in the eyes of rulers and nations, and will retard our emancipation. There is no benefit to be gained from the reforms. If changes are needed in our religious practises, time will bring them, and ~~th~~ nothing else will. These <sup>men</sup> ~~men~~ will not be able to accomplish anything for they have no authority in any country with the exception of Germany. They cannot even benefit their childred by these innovations. The coming generation would prefer the faith of the Gentiles than this colorless, cold religion with no emotion and no spirit."<sup>66</sup>

When the Rabbis of the convention wanted to know the reasons for the absence of so many Rabbis, Rapoport addressed an open letter to them giving his reasons for his absence and he also wrote "I would like to know what prompts you in your convening. I can hear you <sup>answering</sup> ~~answering~~ to reform ~~a~~ certain practises in order to prevent the conversions which are taking place. I question whether you have the right to change any custom current among our people and not to speak of a ~~f~~undamental law. ~~The~~ No man has the right, since the days of Tanaim and the Amoraim, to institute anything against the spirit of the Rabbis. I see where one of your Rabbis (referring to Hold<sup>h</sup>heim) wishes to entrust the power of granting divorce to every Rabbi and to the civil courts, even tho it may conflict with the spirit of Judaism. But his theory is untenable and is built on a weak foundation. To follow his wishes would destroy the family <sup>life</sup> of Israel. Who will listen to your advice? All your views and innovations are limited to the Jews in Germany, which fact you yourselves

will admit. And I doubt whether one sixth of the Jews of Germany will be influenced by your decisions. And even those who seem to be under your jurisdiction, those do so not because they respect and ~~know~~ honor you, but because it is most convenient for them to follow your instructions. And from the addresses of some of those who are assembled, we would believe that the love of Israel is not in your hearts. Just think of what one young Rabbi said, "<sup>Israel</sup> Israel for centuries turned its back against culture, Its spirit-~~its~~ its emotions were atrophied because the actions which actuated its life were not understood by those who performed them, no spiritual motive actuated their deeds, until our own generation." It is well nigh impossible to believe that one who calls himself a Rabbi in Israel would write such absurd statements. And none of those assembled answered this attack. But how absurd are these remarks. At a period when the peoples of Asia and Europe were pursuing the shadows of darkness, when they were waging war against each other without knowing the reason for doing so, when they rejected all culture and hated any intellectual, the sages and wise men of Israel studied zealously their Holy Writings and the books of their earlier sages.....Comparing our sages to the sages of other peoples, we would find, relatively speaking, that our sages surpassed <sup>and exalted</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>exalted</sup> the sages of other nations. Not a generation has passed that our people has not produced a great intellectual. And even scholars of other peoples admit that the spread of culture during the dark medieval days through Spain, must be attributed to the Jews, who lived in the north ~~and~~ under the rule of Christianity and in the south under the rule of the M<sup>u</sup>hammedans....And our sages in Spain despite the persecution and the torture which they underwent, did not spend their time foolishly as their persecutors did, but poured over the Scriptures, wrote commentaries, and composed piutim.

And while those in the north were weeping out their hearts in lamentations their brethren in the south were singing praises to the Most High and were composing beautiful songs. When one reads them today, he is uplifted and removed from the worries of his material existence. What have you in mind when you attempt to destroy all hope, to rob Israel of its aspirations for a future redemption? This I suppose, is due to the outcry of some renegades who say like the servant whose ear was bored, "I love my master and not do wish to be set free." And because they wish to dispense with this hope, they change the character of the prayers. All this will not help them in their political relation to the other people. The other nations regard the Jews as faithful, patriotic, even though they may long for the land of their ancestors. They will not deprive them of their civil rights and citizenship just because the Jews comfort themselves in their prayers and speak of past evils done them, and of future hopes. Your attempts to eradicate all mention of Palestine, will deprive the Jew of his past and future and leave him only the fleeting present. Cease to do your evil work."<sup>67</sup>

Geiger informed the conference that a letter was received from Rapoport, but because it was written in Hebrew, the conference voted not to have its contents read. This, as would be expected, aroused the wrath and fury of Rapoport and he sent a third letter to Raphael Kirchoheim, in which he denounced the assembly in most bitter terms. He wrote "I saw from your acts at your first conference that you were bent on evil deeds; but now I am confirmed in my opinion that you are bent on destroying the structure of Judaism. You have eradicated Hebrew, since you hate it as you hate Judaism. A young upstart in your midst (referring to Herzfeld)

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67. Tochoachath Megullah p. 4-29

made the statement that the Scriptures are not the work of God. Where did he obtain such a destructive view? These new judges in Israel do not know the people of Israel nor its character. During their early youth they ~~ka~~ leave their homes to study in the secular schools, without first having learned to read Hebrew well, and without coming in contact occasionally with their brethren, and acquainting themselves with their conditions. After they have completed the studies preparatory to law and medicine, they are undecided as to what to do. The study of law requires too much time, and medicine has ~~toom~~ many in it already. Then the thought strikes them, why not a healer of souls? That does not require study. And eventually they confer upon themselves the title of Rabbi. They are candidates for the rabbinate. They then peer into some books written by non-Jews on or against Israel, for they cannot read Hebrew books or, rather, they despise them because of statements they have heard from non-Jews. They glance occasionally into ~~xxxxxx~~ Gesenius or into the Lexicons. - I have heard of the case of a young candidate who heard that there was a law about ~~הכנס~~. Not knowing the meaning thereof he peered into Gesenius but he could not find it. He then asked his colleagues to lend him their lexicons, but even there he failed in his quest. By merely glancing into these books they consider themselves fit to speak on Jewish matters, to ridicule the Talmud, etc. Some of these are selected by their congregation in order to lighten the yoke of their religion."<sup>68</sup>

These three letters were combined and published in 1846 under the title of "הנהגת חכמי ארץ ישראל".

In his introduction to "הנהגת חכמי ארץ ישראל" published in 1848 he again thundered against the Reform group in Berlin. He wrote in part "With this work (referring to the "הנהגת חכמי ארץ ישראל") the righteous can take

revenge on the prophets of deceit who greet only the present, but not the past and the future; and with a pen they draw a line through the past and the hope of the future. But in our literature and liturgy the past and future are linked together. The greatest of our prophets who promised that our covenant would never be broken also added the promise "And I will recall the covenant of former days," <sup>and</sup> the men of the great assembly said in their prayers "who remembers the kindness of the fathers and brings redemption to their descendants," He who shaves off the head and the white hair of the elders destroys also the hope of the child.....In their days, the days of the early Gaonim, there were no renegade teachers who maintained that it was necessary to violate the Sabbath to make a living.".. Here we see the end of the rebels and sinners even of today. Their names shall become as warnings. They are a group...ein <sup>"Genossenschaft"</sup> ~~Gehissegang~~ of evil doers. They are a gathering of Rabbis in the summer days. They pick late summer fruit and when the summer is gone no one is saved and helped."<sup>69</sup> In it he also attacked Furst for having made use of some of his investigations without giving him credit for it.

When Geiger published his "Urschrift" in 1857 Rapoport knew no bounds in his rage and anger. In his opinion this work was the greatest sacrilege committed in Israel. The fury of his wrath can be seen in a letter he addressed to Luzatto "Another one, who calls himself a Rabbi, has joined the innovators. That person is Geiger who writes in his work (Urschrift) that he has no portion in the God of Israel. After I have passed my seventieth birthday I will answer his views, for silence in this instance would mean fear. A man, to whom the Torah is entrusted to teach it to his congregation cries out, "Your fathers and teachers have deceived you. The greater part of this law of Moses was composed a thousand years

after the days of Moses.<sup>71</sup> If no reader rises up to refute his charges, what will the men of the coming generation say? That the rabbis of the past generation removed the garments of the rabbinate from themselves and revealed to the world that there is no Torah, that there is no Mitzvah.<sup>70</sup> In 1868 the son of Rapoport published the *Or Torah*, which he claims was written by his father just prior to his death, as a refutation of Geiger's theories as expounded in his "Urschrift". In his introduction to the work of his, Rapoport wrote, "So may God be with me and keep me in the path I am traveling, which is now leading to the eternal resting place, I would not have paid any attention to these lies and would not have answered them, I have never read any of their blasphemings, with the exception of their first ones (referring to the Urschrift). But my zeal for the Torah and the reproach of the blasphemers <sup>fanned</sup> fanned a flame within my bones, that I could ~~xx~~ not resist writing. This Torah, according to this individual, is false and consists of the writings of various men.<sup>72</sup> Then Rapoport proceeded in most virulent terms to denounce Geiger personally and to refute the various theories set forth by Geiger. Altho we may not argue with Rapoport in all of his remarks regarding the work, we must admit that Geiger was very arbitrary in some of his views. Bernfeld<sup>72</sup> and Geiger<sup>73</sup> believed that the "Or Torah" was not written by Rapoport just prior to his death, but in the first stages of his fury when he <sup>s</sup> saw the contents of the "Urschrift." They are of the opinion that the great critic did not wish to see the works published, but it was only through the rash action of his son that its contents were made known to the public. Rapoport practically spent the last years of his life in denouncing Reform, ridiculing it, showing how through various stages it led

71. Or Torah - N. Yehuda p. 1

72. Dqr Chacham, p. 63

73. Judische Zeitschrift fur Wissenschaft und leben vol 7. p. 80





"Furst wrote a bitter denunciation of Rapoport for having attacked him in his "חזקוני". The older that Rapoport became and the more he attacked Reform, the more he became the target of their criticism. <sup>וה</sup> <sup>הוא</sup> <sup>הוא</sup> called him a hypocrite and a deceiver. In 1867 Geiger took a calmer attitude toward Rapoport and analyzed his relations as follows: "Rapoport could not keep step with the onward march of ideas. He was satisfied to destroy the ignorance of his own little <sup>circle</sup> ~~circle~~. He was only interested in kindling the light of knowledge in traditional Judaism. He thought it sufficient to have the old orthodoxy assume a friendly attitude towards culture, but the attempt to bring Judaism up to modern conditions, to fight for reform was in his eyes a dangerous one. The viewing of history as ever growing, as never stagnant, was a dangerous one in his opinion. Although he himself showed how the power of the Babylonian Talmud was brought about, he was not willing to <sup>break</sup> ~~break~~ away from its yoke. He did not lack the critical outlook. He spoke of a 2nd Isaiah, of Maccabean Psalms. But when it came to take Biblical criticism seriously, when it became necessary to follow up the result of criticism, he withdrew in a great fright. Gradually he lost all comprehension and understanding of the ideas that were stirring the world, and he also began to lose his skill in his own particular field. Although surrounded by the greatest cultural activity, which would have enriched him had he so desired, he wasted his time." <sup>77</sup>

Geiger in reviewing his OR TORAH wrote of him, "You all know that this individual, who passed away but lately, died, as far as his spirit was concerned thirty years ago, and therefore you cannot expect to find anything of intellectual value in the works which he produced during this period and which were animated by his hypocritical Orthodox attitude." <sup>78</sup>

In justification of Rapoport, we cannot agree with those who maintain that the piety and the religious zeal which characterized his activities after he had attained the Rabbinate of Prague was merely of an external nature, merely assumed. It is true that a reaction took place when he reached the age of about fifty, but this fact must not be attributed to hypocrisy, as Bernfeld has so well put it, but to a natural psychological law. We have seen thousands of similar cases. Who has not heard of men, who have been radicals in their youth, but who as they grow older and undergo various experiences, assume a more conservative outlook on life? This is, psychologists tell us, the way of all flesh. Rapoport falls under the same category and hence we must not attribute his reaction to caution but to a natural psychological tendency. We believe that Holdheim's characterization of Rapoport is that he distinguished between the theoretical and the practical, the intellectual and the ceremonial - is the true one. That Rapoport made this distinction between investigation and practical life <sup>he was</sup> can be seen in one of the letters which he wrote while ~~he was~~ still a comparatively young man. He wrote "If at times I hope to ascend the heights and ride in an opposite direction to those who ride in chariots of the Talmud and Mishna, I clip my wings and remain below." And this tendency of his to make a difference between "research" and "ceremonial or rather practical life" became more manifest as he grew older. But he never smoked the pipe of peace with the ultra-orthodox as evidenced by an article which he contributed to the Jeshurun<sup>79</sup> and by his attack on Samson Raphael Hirsch. But Rapoport sinned in one respect. Recalling the days when he was hounded and persecuted by the chassidim and the ultra pious he should have never denounced men who were not in agreement with him.

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79. Jeshurun p. 65-92

## CHAPTER IV

## AN APPRECIATION OF JUDAH LOB RAPOPORT

Rapoport's name will go down through the annals of Jewish history as one of the founders of <sup>the</sup> "Wissenschaft des Judenthums". Through the publication of the biographies (1829-1831) the pathway for a thorough knowledge of the internal history of Judaism and the Jewish race was opened up. He was the first to plough the field of biography and reveal to the world the life of our ancestors. Rapoport proved indisputably and <sup>upon strictly</sup> upon strictly scientific grounds that the great representatives of Judaism, its leaders in the Middle Ages, instead of shunning the light of knowledge, actually kindled and fed it. He showed that, at a time when European nations were still steeped in the darkness of the Middle Ages, the Jews cultivated general science. Chronology, historical geography, the history of literature and other branches important for the critical investigation of history, which had hitherto been altogether neglected, or only superficially treated, were by him first proved necessary and applied. The acute intelligence with which he united disjointed facts and separated others apparently <sup>connected</sup> connected; the critical touchstone which he applied to distinguish the true from the false, and facts from legends, produced such suggestive results, that after Krochmal, he must be considered the father of Jewish science. As a critical investigator he was preceded by Jost, Zunz, and Krochmal. But Zunz himself admits in his introduction to his ~~work~~ work on Rashi that Rapoport excelled him in this dominion. And all that had been achieved through Jost vanished before Rapoport's researches like superficial talk before a well digested, well constructed, clearly conceived oration. He differed from Krochmal in that his investigations were more

minute and detailed. Krochmal had more liking for the general and encyclopediae studies; details served him only as a confirmation of his theory. Rapoport, on the other hand, was more interested in minute research-and general studies, did not attract him. Rapoport did not lose himself ~~as~~ as his teacher Krochmal did in the mazes of Hegelian philosophy, nor was he bewitched by the beautiful flowers of speculation.<sup>80</sup> Though Bernfeld may be of the opinion that Krochmal excelled Rapoport and that the power of the latter compared with the power of the former was like the light of the moon to the brilliancy of the sun,<sup>81</sup> Rapoport achieved more in the field of critical research, because he did not allow himself to be intimidated by heretic hunters, and displayed more manly courage openly to defend the truth recognized by him as such. Hence the scientific movement within Judaism, which since his time has continually grown in force, must be entirely attributed to him. He was well equipped for critical investigation; knew all the bypaths of Jewish literature; was consecrated as it were, from the womb for this work. Geiger, who bitterly assailed him for his attacks on Reform, wrote of him as follows: "Rapoport's great achievement and the invaluable service which he <sup>has</sup> rendered consists in the publication of the biographies of the Rabbis of the Medieval Ages, in which the ~~k~~ cultural development of Medieval Jewry is <sup>is</sup> revealed with profound scholarship and with amazing acuteness.....He mastered the sciences and also acquired a scientific method necessary for his investigations. His knowledge of the Talmud and other Jewish literature was vast and extensive, and he was also equipped with profound acuteness characteristic of Polish Rabbis. He spent a little time dabbling in belles-lettres, but he quickly discovered that his strength lay not in that direction. So true and vivid are the characters which he portrayed that they seem to

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80. Gesammelte Schriften by David Kaufmann vol 1 p. 323

81. Dor Chacham p. 9

live. To give a proper description of the great individuals he was compelled not only to draw his material from their books but also from the fragmentary manuscripts. Not only did he paint a picture of the great characters but also of the cultural conditions of the period in which they lived and worked. Out of the chaos of light and darkness Rapoport gave us a true description of the cultural development of the times. In brief, Rapoport painted his pictures for us in clear and vivid colors. Although he may have erred in many details, although he may have on a number of occasions worked from mere conjecture, he undoubtedly opened up a new pathway for others to travel upon. A new era began with Rapoport. Inspired by Rapoport a group of men rose to carry on the investigation of Jewish lore to greater heights." <sup>82</sup>

Rapoport distinguished himself in another field, in the mazes and labyrinths of the Talmud. To him the Talmud was not merely a legal book regulating the acts and actions of his people, but a living history, containing the hopes, aspirations and life of his beloved people. At a time when the Oral Law was ridiculed, at a period when some of the reformers wanted to dethrone the Oral law and enthrone "Mosaism<sup>u</sup>s", Rapoport arose to disclose its hidden treasur<sup>s</sup>es and proved conclusively that only through it was Israel enabled to survive the cataclysms of history. He waged open battle against ר' אברהם קרומל and Abraham Krochmal who had launched severe attacks against the Talmud and the Mishna, and especially against the compiler of the Mishna. Rapoport was the first to point out the differences between the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds, and showed that in many respects the Palestinian Talmud was superior to the Babylonian Talmud. Isaac Hirsch Wise, who criticized Rapoport, had the

following to say of Rapoport's endeavors in this direction: "He did a noble task by glorifying the Talmud and the Mishna. He revealed the hidden treasures of its wisdom, and he clarified many passages hitherto not understood. He illumined many phrases covered, as it were, with a cloud. Through his efforts the Talmud became a source book of the history of our people of the age, by means of which we will have a better understanding of our own times. His remarks as to the Haggadah, the difference<sup>s</sup> between the Babylonian and Palestinian Talmud and certain customs practiced in Israel are very valuable."<sup>83</sup>

Comparing the literary styles of Rapoport and Krochmal Bernfeld made the following statement in his book *הדור והדור* published in 1896, in which he seemed to be prejudiced against Rapoport, despite his statements to the contrary. "I prefer the style of Krochmal because it is short and concise - <sup>a</sup>style suited for scientific purposes, without any embellishments. The style of Rapoport, on the other hand, is <sup>l</sup>laden with too many figures of speech - his style is too verbose, full of repetitions." <sup>84</sup> In his *דור ודור* Bernfeld, although less severe than in his book *הדור והדור* made the same criticism, "The style of Rapoport," Bernfeld wrote, "was very <sup>flowery</sup> ~~flowing~~ and ornate, full of imagery and figures of speech...He was too verbose. Oftime strange idioms crept into his writings. This dulled the sharp edge of his wisdom.....He buried his thoughts under a load of beautiful figures of speech. His style was full of strength, but was not fitted for scientific research."<sup>85</sup> Graetz, on the other hand, maintained that whilst the Hebrew style of Nachman Krochmal was rugged, awkward, almost stiff as that of the Tibbonides, and read like a translation from a foreign language, Rapoport displayed a remarkable flow of language, ease, and fluency.<sup>86</sup>

84. Dor Chacham p. 13

85. T. Shir, p. 22

86. Graetz, vol 5, p. 614

The writer of this thesis cannot agree with Bernfeld in his criticism of Rapoport's style. But the writer, which may be to his <sup>free</sup> ~~temperament~~ <sup>temperamental</sup>, youth, or ignorance most likely, appreciated the beauty of Rapoport's style whenever figures of speech were utilized, <sup>and</sup> sensed the rhythm of his language whenever imagery was injected. The writer found the <sup>השפה הזאת</sup> the language of which is very ornate and which was criticized by Bernfeld<sup>87</sup> very entertaining and on the other hand the "<sup>השפה הזאת</sup>" which was praised by Bernfeld<sup>88</sup> rather dull reading.

With regard to Israel's relations to other peoples, Rapoport was an <sup>גדול</sup> <sup>של</sup> <sup>העם</sup> <sup>העברי</sup>, one who believed in the golden mean. He <sup>היה</sup> was of the opinion that Israel should not ~~seclude~~ seclude itself in the ghetto and shun all culture to preserve its particular identity, but rather come in contact with all nations and learn their ways and customs. Unlike Luzatto, he maintained that the emancipation would benefit Israel, and he urged all ~~the~~ to reap the benefits thereof. His everlasting cry was that Israel must drink from all wells of culture, even those of non-Jews. He strove with all his might and main to install the arts and sciences into his people, to have them climb the ladder of knowledge. The hatred which other people heaped upon him, he maintained, was due to our neglect of the arts. He could not sympathize with the view that Israel, in order to preserve its peculiar genius, must avoid all contact with the culture of other groups. He described the love which Buk cherished for his people who before entering Hassidism was a "seclusionist" as follows: "A love like this is in reality hatred; it has injured us since time immemorial; it has aided in augmenting the hatred of the non-Jew against us -it has set us back hundreds of years. Rapoport believed that we must draw our inspiration from all sources. In the following poem one can detect his attitude toward the culture of other nations: "I <sup>love</sup> ~~love~~ my people with all my soul and with all my might. My spirit, my soul, my life, my glory

87. T. Shir p. 120

88. T. Shir p. 120



belong to her. But not like you, will my soul be silent at her lowly state, I will bend all my efforts to disperse her darkness with light. I will bring to her, as a gift, all sorts of delicacies; I will bring to her feet the choicest things of the nations - From the circumcised and the uncircumcised, from the Greeks and the Romans, from the Germans, Frenchmen and Mohammedans, they are alike to me. Acquire wisdom from all men, then you will attain the top of the ladder. Assimilate the valuable part of their work, then you will excel them all.<sup>89</sup> The same sentiment is expressed in one of his letters: "Those among us who look," he wrote "out into the world in order to be able to understand the ways of our Torah better, ~~experience~~ <sup>learn</sup> will ~~teach us~~ to take in only the good and valuable contributions of other groups.....Can we keep ourselves secluded from other peoples? We who dwell among nations, who cultivate the sciences and produced hundreds of books every day?"<sup>90</sup> In his controversy with Luzatto, who did not believe in the emancipation, who maintained that Israel should keep itself far aloof from contact with other peoples, we can hear the same note struck by Rappoport: "Do you think," he wrote to Luzatto, "that Israel could have existed, secluded, without taking something from other groups; I see in our dispersion the hand of God, to have us receive from the various nations the best they had to offer. It is true that Judaism was superior to Hellenism, but it could not have withstood the onslaughts of history alone."<sup>91</sup> But Rapoport never pleaded for mere knowledge alone. He was not interested in the attainment of culture for mere culture's sake. He investigated into the annals of his

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89. Dor Chacham p. 11

90. Dor Chochom p. 12

91. I Shir. p. 108

people not merely to acquire fame, not merely to satisfy his whims, but to glorify the name of Israel. The welfare of Israel motivated all of his researches. Rapoport's investigations were characterized by fervor and love. They must be regarded as national performances, not as the products of idle scholarship. He wrote "Do not say, Heaven forbid, that I do not love my people. I swear, that my whole heart is consecrated to the service of Israel. I love her with all my heart and soul. I will bear to the end of my days any burden, if it redounds to the credit of my people. But "experience" and study have shown me that not by separating itself from all peoples, not by shunning their wisdom, but only by searching out the best of other peoples, can Israel ascend to the heights." He pleaded with his co-religionists to study zealously so that Israel may be honored thereby. He never failed in his works to write of the grandeur of our people, and to express his admiration for his ancestors. The following passage displays clearly his love: "Do you know my brethren," he wrote "that the existence of our people has been the miracle of the ages? Those nations who trusted in strength, in armies, have gone the way of all flesh, but our people, who sought refuge under the wings of God, have survived.. The love of our people is our foundation. Upon it, all the rest can be built.....Cause the sparks of your love for your people to burst forth into flames."<sup>92</sup> In answer to a query he wrote "Listen, ye young men. Increase your studies, but do not add pain to your inheritance. Do not forget that ye are sons of God who has watched over us thousands of years."<sup>93</sup> Despite the fact that he loved knowledge, he never permitted it to displace the love of his people.

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92. T. Shir p. 25

93. T. Shir p. 20

In his religious outlook Rapoport was, as it has been stated in the previous chapters, an ~~אדם~~ ~~אשר~~ ~~אשר~~, a man who traveled the middle road. He avoided the two extremes - the extreme of ultra orthodoxy and the extreme of radical reform. His life was a continual battle against these two extremes and he believed that both led to the marshlands of destruction. He was a Jew belonging to the Zachariah Frankel designation.

We believe that many of the criticisms which Isaac Hirsch Wise made against Rapoport are unwarranted. In the misunderstanding which arose between Krochmal and Rapoport, for instance, Isaac Hirsch Wise holds Rapoport responsible. He says, "I do not believe that Krochmal did anything to sever the bonds of friendship. Is it possible that Krochmal, who was humble and meek, who gave unstintingly of his wisdom to all who but asked for it, whose entire life was devoted to the glorification of the Torah, is it possible that he should give cause for strife and struggle? It is more likely that Rapoport, who was easily insulted as is shown by the dispute he had with Luzatto and Jost, was responsible for the breaking off of relations.<sup>94</sup> Isaac Hirsch Wise would put more trust in a conjecture of his than in the explicit statement given by Rapoport who said, "I did nothing to cause the severing of the ties of friendship." Isaac Hirsch Wise attributes also the break with Luzatto to the obstinacy of Rapoport.<sup>95</sup> Any unbiased individual, who has read the interchange of letters between Luzatto and Rapoport<sup>and</sup> is acquainted with the details of their controversy, ~~will~~ will readily admit that Luzatto is entirely responsible for the estrangement which took place between them. Even Bernfeld, who was influenced by the criticism of Isaac Hirsch Wise, despite Bernfeld's statements to the contrary, admitted that the guilty person was Luzatto.<sup>96</sup>

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94. Zichronosi p. 113

95. Zichronosi p. 103

96. T. Shir p. 64

Another unjust criticism leveled by Isaac Hirsch Wise was that Rapoport was not tolerant enough to listen to opinions which were contrary to his, that once Rapoport had come to a conclusion, nothing could induce him to give it up, that Rapoport was not among "those men who are insulted and insult not."<sup>97</sup> The absurdity of this criticism is well pointed out in *חיי רבינו* by Abraham Epstein, as a refutation of the charges leveled by Isaac Hirsch Wise. Abraham ~~Ep~~ Epstein wrote "The remark that Rapoport was not one of those who are insulted and insult not, is entirely false. How did Rapoport reply to the insults which Luzatto heaped upon him? Rapoport wrote, "What have I done unto you, what have I committed to have aroused this furious rage of yours?.....I do not know whether you will believe me when I say that my soul cleaves unto you even as the flame clings to the coal....I have not broken nor will ever break the covenant...and you can do as you please."<sup>98</sup> Though there may be some justification in some of the criticisms of I. H. Wise, most of them are unfounded and unwarranted.

Rapoport not only drank from the wells of Knowledge, but he aided others in drinking from the wells of knowledge. Not only did he aid young students by word of mouth but also in a financial way. Many scholars have testified that Rapoport helped them in the publication of their work. Even when he was in dire financial straits, he always found the means to aid a zealous student.<sup>99</sup> Rapoport was known for his kindness, his sympathy, his willingness to help those who were in distress. The people in Prague used to say that Rapoport deserved to occupy the high position that he did, not so much through his scholarship and learning but through his kind and noble deeds. The characterization of Rapoport "the walking encyclopedia of Judaism" by Bernfeld is very apt.<sup>100</sup>

97. Zichronosi p. 86

98. Divre Bekores p. 5

99. T. Shir p. 28

100. W.Z. fur J.T. p. 473

"His thoughts were those of a man among men, his emotions were those of a tender woman, his deeds were those of an innocent child."<sup>101</sup>  
He was not only respected but loved. Upon his head shone the three fold crown--that of priest, of scholar and of martyr."<sup>102</sup>

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101. T. Shir. p. 131

102. Kurlander. p. 32

Report on Mr. Harry N. Caplan's Thesis.

May 6, 1924.

To the Faculty Hebrew Union College.

The thesis of Mr. Caplan bears the title

Judah Loeb Rapoport  
His Attitude towards  
Orthodoxy and Reform

and consists of four chapters: Biography of Rapoport, Attitude of Rapoport towards Orthodoxy, Attitude of Rapoport towards Reform, Appreciation of Rapoport.

The work of Mr. Caplan is largely one of compilation. In the nature of the task set to him, and in the literary situation of the matter, he hardly could do more. This work of compilation he did well.

Furthermore, inasmuch as a good deal of his material had to be drawn from Hebrew sources, the writer did a creditable piece of work. Only in a very few places his translations need revision.

The chapter on Biography is entirely too elaborate, it takes up 35 of the 74 pages of the thesis. One of the consequences of this is repetition. Some of the passages from the sources are quoted verbatim not less than three times.

In the chapter, Appreciation, the Decisions of the writer are in the nature of the casting vote of a chairman, he just decides without going into an examination of the questions involved.

On the whole, however, the work of Mr. Caplan is a complete presentation of what the title calls for, and will give the English readers the desired information on the subject.

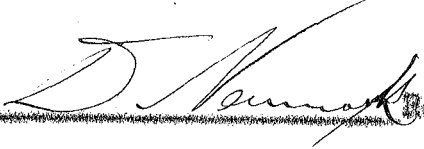
After some revision, the thesis could well be published.

Report on Mr. Harry H. Caplan's Thesis

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We recommend Mr. Caplan's essay for acceptance as his graduation thesis.

Respectfully,

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Referee

\_\_\_\_\_  
Co-Referee