SEPHARDIC RABBIS: Isaac Shemuel Reggio (1784-1855)

The portrait of Rabbi Isaac Shemuel Reggio

Rabbi Reggio studied Tora under his father, and secular studies in the local gymnasium. At the age of fourteen the prodigious student had such mastery of the Hebrew language that he wrote a metrical poem on the death of Rabbi Moshe Chefetz z”l (the author of “Melekhet Machashebet”).
Rabbi Reggio also learned French, German, Latin, Semitic Languages and excelled in Mathematics. Rabbi Reggio was appointed by the emperor as professor of belles-lettres, geography, and history, and chancellor of the lycée of Gorizia.
Because of the influence of the European illuminism (*haskala*) an imperial decree was issued in 1822 that no community might appoint a Rabbi who had not graduated in philosophy. As a reaction, Rabbi Reggio published at Venice an appeal in Italian for the establishment of a Rabbinical Seminary, arguing that just as the Emperor did not desire Rabbis devoid of philosophical training, neither did the Jews desire Rabbis who had had no appropriate rabbinical education.
This appeal resulted in the establishment of the famous Rabbinical College in Padua, for which Rabbi Reggio, its founder, drew up the statutes and the educational program.
Among other books he published:

- **Ma’amar Tora min ha-Shamayim** (Vienna, 1818). Advocating the divine origin of the Tora.
- **Sefer Torat Elokim** (ib. 1821), originally a translation of the Pentateuch in Italian with commentaries in Hebrew. There is a new Hebrew edition of this important book done by R. Yosef Shelomo Harary in Yerushalayim, 2004.
- **HaTora vehaPilosophia**. Rabbi Reggio applies the term “philosophy” to all studies outside the Talmud and

Rabbinics. In this important book Rabbi Reggio not only endeavors to reconcile the Jewish religion with modern science, but attempts to prove that they are indispensable to each other.

Click **here** to download and read “Torat Elokim” (original edition, from Hebrewbooks.org)
Click **here** to download and read “HaTora vehaPilosophia” (original edition, from Hebrewbooks.org)