


JEWISH WORLD

Poland's Catholic Church publishes book co-authored by rabbi, priest

In 'Introduction to Jewish Literature and Biblical Exegesis', Rabbi Yitzchak Rapoport discusses traditions surrounding receiving of Torah at Mount Sinai, explains structure and function of Talmud

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 For the first time in the history of Poland, and possibly in the history of Christianity, the Catholic Church has published a new book co-authored by a Polish Jewish rabbi and a Catholic priest.

The book, entitled "Introduction to Jewish Literature and Biblical Exegesis", was written in Polish and published recently by the official publishing house of the Catholic Church.

The idea behind the book came from Professor Mariusz Rosik, a Polish priest in Wroclaw, Poland, who approached Shavei Israel emissary in Wroclaw, Rabbi Yitzchak Rapoport, and proposed that they co-author a book on Jewish sources that would present both the Christian and Jewish perspective. Rabbi Rapoport gave Professor Rosik his consent only after obtaining an explicit promise from the Church not to edit or alter his text in any way.

In the book, Rabbi Rapoport discusses the traditions surrounding the receiving of the Torah at Mount Sinai, and explains the structure and function of the Talmud and exegesis in Jewish tradition and thought as well as in Biblical commentary.

It should be noted that although this content is diametrically opposed to the official views of the Catholic Church, the Church nevertheless took the unusual – and surprising – step of granting the book an official imprimatur, which was given by the Archbishop of Wroclaw, Marian Golebiewski.

According to Rabbi Yitzhak Rapoport, who has been serving as Shavei Israel's emissary in Wroclaw for the past three years, the publication of the book represents a significant development in relations between Poland's Catholics and Jews.

"This book is of special significance. Until it was written, all Polish Catholics knew about Jews is what the Church told them. For the first time ever, this book reveals what Jews think about themselves and about Judaism, and that is what makes it unique," noted Rabbi Rapoport.

"This is a dramatic and significant step in a process that has been taking place in the Polish Catholic Church in recent years, a process in which the Church is becoming more open and tolerant towards Jews," he added.

Cooperation and mutual respect

Michael Freund, Shavei Israel Chairman and Founder, said that "the fact that the Church, at its own initiative, sought out the opinion of a Polish rabbi and published it alongside that of one of its own priests, underlines the renewed vigor of Jewish life in Poland and the bridges that are being built between the two communities.

"I hope that the publication of this book will help to counter anti-Semitism in Poland, and will demonstrate to Poles that despite our deep-seated theological differences, Jews and Catholics can live together side-by-side on the basis of cooperation and mutual respect."

Shavei Israel is a non-profit organization founded by Freund, who immigrated to Israel from the United States, with the aim of strengthening ties between the State of Israel and the descendants of Jews around the world.

Shavei Israel has three emissaries in Poland who are the spearhead of the organization's activities there, which include: convening seminars in Poland and Israel for the "hidden Jews"; publishing newsletters and other Polish-language publications on Jewish subjects and distributing them among various communities in Poland; providing assistance in the aliyah, conversion and absorption process for those members of the community in Poland who choose to immigrate to Israel, and more.

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