

Passing of Prof. Ada Rapoport-Albert

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H-Judaic is devastated to learn of the untimely passing, from cancer, of Prof. Ada Rapoport-Albert (1945-2020), professor emerita of Hebrew and Jewish Studies at University College, London. Professor Rapoport-Albert, who was known throughout the Jewish scholarly world, was among the last students of Prof. J.G. Weiss, pioneering scholar of early Hasidism. Her own work, culminating in her volume of essays entitled [Hasidic Studies: Essays in History and Gender](#) (2018) and her path-breaking [Women and the Messianic Heresy of Sabbatai Zevi 1666 - 1816](#) (2011) paved new scholarly ground for all scholars of Kabbalah and Hasidism. Her attention to gender has been particularly significant and influential.

Prof. Rapoport-Albert's biography on the UCL website reads as follows:

Professor Ada Rapoport-Albert - Professor of Hebrew and Jewish Studies and Head of the Department of Hebrew and Jewish Studies.

Professor Rapoport-Albert's doctoral dissertation was a study of the process by which the Hasidic movement, which began in mid 18th century Poland, developed in the first half of the 19th century from a small, loosely affiliated group of charismatic individuals into a fully institutionalised mass movement of spiritual revival in Judaism, sweeping through much of Central-East European Jewry. Since then Prof. Rapoport-Albert has published many studies of Hasidism, focusing on particular institutions (e.g. confession before the Rebbe, hereditary succession in the leadership) or schools of thought (Braslav, Habad), as well as on particular topics (e.g. the perception of history and history writing within the movement, the position of women in Hasidism). She is currently a member of the international team of Hasidic scholars engaged in the collaborative production of a major new history of Hasidism, working under the auspices of the Simon Dubnow Institute in Leipzig.

In addition to her work on Hasidism, Prof. Rapoport-Albert's interests include gender issues in the history of Judaism, especially the gendered perception of the ascetic life and its implications for the Jewish mystical tradition. She is currently completing a book entitled *Female Bodies - Male Souls: Asceticism and Gender in the Jewish Mystical Tradition*, to be published by the Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, and has published a monograph in Hebrew on the position of women in the 17th-19th century messianic heresy of Sabbatai Zevi and his successors, including the Polish adventurer Jacob Frank and his daughter Eva. An English version of this, *Women and the Messianic Heresy of Sabbatai Zevi, 1666-1816*, was published by the Littman Library of Jewish Civilization in March 2011.

Professor Rapoport-Albert directed a 5-year AHRC-funded research project on the linguistic (largely Aramaic) and literary context of the Zohar - the most influential literary product of the Jewish mystical tradition. She is currently co-editing two volumes of studies that have emerged from this project."

Many of Prof. Rapoport-Albert's works may be read on her Academia site, <https://ucl.academia.edu/AdaRapoportAlbert>. Prof. David Assaf has directed out attention to his blog, https://onegshabbat.blogspot.com/2020/06/blog-post_22.html? where he has not only penned a long necrology (in Hebrew), but also published pictures and an important evaluation of Prof. Rapoport-Albert's scholarship.

We extend deepest condolences to the extended family, and to colleagues and students of Prof. Ada Rapoport-Albert around the world.

Jonathan D. Sarna

Chair H-Judaic



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