



Haskalah and Beyond

The Reception of the Hebrew
Enlightenment and the Emergence
of Haskalah Judaism

Moshe Pelli

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FOR MY WIFE, DALIA

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PREFACE

This book, *Haskalah and Beyond, The Reception of the Hebrew Enlightenment and the Emergence of Haskalah Judaism*, deals with the Hebrew Haskalah (Enlightenment) — the literary, cultural and social movement that emerged at the end of the eighteenth century in Germany and flourished in Eastern Europe till the 1880s.

The Haskalah represents the beginning of a new period in Jewish history. It marks the budding of modernism and perhaps some signs of secularism surfacing in Judaism and Jewish society.

Its proponents — known as Maskilim (Enlighteners) — were young intellectuals, writers, and educators, who, having been influenced by the European Enlightenment, aspired to invigorate the Jewish people. They perceived the coming of new Age of Reason, which advocated tolerance, understanding, and humanism among all people.

The Maskilim wished to introduce modernism into Jewish culture and Jewish life, and to vitalize the Hebrew language and literature. To achieve their goals, they planned to introduce reforms in Jewish education and bring it up to date by revising the traditional curriculum, adding to it secular subjects including science, mathematics, and languages.

While advocating these changes in Judaism, the Maskilim expressed their intention to adhere to its essentials, and to remain loyal to their tradition, arguing in effect that they wish to restore Judaism to its original, pristine state.

Addressing this topic in chapter one, I classified these activities as a “cultural revolution.” In effect, I argued that the Haskalah was a *counter-culture*. Its manifested orientation intended to modify or replace some of the contemporary rabbinic cultural framework, institutions and practices and adopt them for its own needs. It was part of the Maskilim’s perception of their envisioned ‘Judaism of the Haskalah.’ Consequently, these efforts are believed to have started a process that ushered in modern times to Judaism.

The pioneering work of the ‘founding fathers’ of the early Haskalah had greatly impacted the later developments of the Haskalah in the nineteenth century. I reached this conclusion on the basis of overt and covert

indications to this effect in my studies of Haskalah. Clearly, the struggle of the early Maskilim to introduce changes in Jewish culture, religion, education and literature was reflected and even intensifies in the literature of the nineteenth century.

To probe this hypothesis, I examined in chapter two the reception of the ground-breaking works of the early Maskilim and their acceptance in the nineteenth century. It is done first through ascertaining the availability of the early works in various disciplines such as Bible, Hebrew language, Haskalah ideology, education, ethics, etc., either in their original print or in reprints of new editions.

Under the same general section of "Reception of Haskalah," the book further examines, in chapter three, the reception of one of the major figures of the early Haskalah, in effect, the main initiator of the movement in Germany, Isaac Euchel, in the nineteenth century. This study serves as an indication of the role that the early Maskilim played in the Haskalah beyond their time and place.

The German *Aufklärung* (Enlightenment) exerted a great influence on the early and later Maskilim, setting literary criteria of aesthetic appreciation. Chapter four probes the reception of one of the important poets and philosophers, Johann Gottfried Herder, in the early and later Haskalah in disseminating his literary theories of biblical poetry and his own poetry.

In their attempts to resuscitate the Hebrew language and Hebrew literature, the Maskilim searched for a renewed mode of expression. They found the rhetorical expression and figurative language of the *melitzah*, the poetic euphuism and rhetorical grandiloquence most suitable for their literary works.

This is subject of the next major section of the book: the language of the Haskalah. Chapter five analyzes the concept of *melitzah* and its used by the Maskilim as their language of the sublime and poetic imagery, and its reception throughout the nineteenth century.

One of the most impressive achievements of the early Haskalah was the founding of the Hebrew press. The final section and its three chapters deal with three major journals of Haskalah as instruments of change and of disseminating the Haskalah ideology.

The first Haskalah periodical in Germany was *Hame'asef* (1783–1811), and subsequently the second journal *Bikurei Ha'itim* (1820–1831) in Galicia, and the scholarly journal *Kerem Hemed* (1833–1856), which served the scholars of *Hochmat Israel* (the study of Judaism) in Galicia and Italy. I have devoted three books of monographs and indices to these journals. These chapters discuss the three periodicals, their impact on the Haskalah and their reception and acceptance in their times and beyond.

The final chapter reviews the aftermath of the Haskalah — the development of the Haskalah renaissance in the nineteenth century.

Upon completion of the book, I would like to express my gratitude to my colleague and friend, Dr. Kurt Koerting, and Dr. Norman Berdichevsky, for their helpful comments and suggestions. Likewise, I would like to thank students assistants Maia Bater, Brooke Goldberg for the preparation of the manuscript. Many thanks to the Dean of the College of Arts and Humanities at the University of Central Florida, and to numerous librarians in research libraries throughout the world who assisted me in the research for this book.

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RECEPTION OF HASKALAH

CHAPTER ONE: THE MASKILIM'S PERCEPTION OF HASKALAH JUDAISM: FORMING AND REFORMING, VISION AND REVISION

להחזיר עטרה ליושנה
Restore [Judaism] to its pristine splendor

Hebrew Haskalah in Germany in the last quarter of the eighteenth century was, as this writer has demonstrated in past studies, a “cultural revolution”¹ — a notion that has been accepted in Haskalah scholarship.² In this chapter I intend to crystallize my thesis and argue that in effect the Haskalah was a *counter-culture* intended to modify or replace the contemporary rabbinic cultural milieu, an effort that consequently ushered in modern times to Judaism. The Maskilim did it in various ways, some of which will be explored here.

¹ Moshe Pelli, *Bema'avkei Temurah* [Struggle for Change] (Tel Aviv, 1988), p. 11, where the term has been used, and elsewhere in the book. See also the writer's other works: *idem*, *The Age of Haskalah* (Leiden, 1979; Revised edition: Lanham, 2006); *idem*, “1783 The Haskalah Begins in Germany with the Founding of the Hebrew Journal *Hame'asef*,” *Yale Companion to Jewish Writing and Thought in German Culture 1096–1996*, Sander L. Gilman, Jack Zipes, editors (New Haven and London, 1997), pp. 101–107; *idem*, “When Did Haskalah Begin? Establishing the Beginning of *Haskalah* and the Definition of ‘Modernism,’ ” *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, XLIV (1999), pp. 55–96.

² See Shmuel Werses' assessment of Haskalah research in his *Megamot Vetzurot Besifrut Hahaskalah* [Trends and Forms in Haskalah Literature] (Jerusalem, 1990), pp. 356–408; David Sorkin, *The Transformation of German Jewry 1780–1840* (New York, 1987); and Shmuel Feiner, *Mahapechat Hane'orut* [Enlightenment Revolution] (Jerusalem, 2002), translated into English: *The Jewish Enlightenment* (Philadelphia, 2004). The discussion below will concentrate on the primary sources within Haskalah proper in order to establish the main thesis of this chapter.

Whether it was actually a cultural revolution or, perhaps, a cultural evolution, depends on what period of Haskalah and what locality we study. Methodologically, it also depends on how we approach the study of Haskalah, whom we select as its spokesmen, and what texts and actions we choose to represent our contention. For Haskalah and Maskilim varied in their approach to changes that they aspired to affect. The more extreme Maskilim were more militant in their treatment of traditional Judaism while the moderate Maskilim were attempting to reconcile with the traditionalist rabbis.

For purpose of clarity and delimitation, our discussion will concentrate mostly on the first period of Haskalah, which established the agenda that was picked up by subsequent phases in the nineteenth century.

These changes, sought by the early Maskilim, were manifested in a cultural entity still in the process of being formed or re-formed. It is referred to here as “Haskalah Judaism.”

The changes fall, in general, under the following major categories:

- Rejuvenating Jewish society by leading its individual members to self-development, self-cultivation, and character-formation in the spirit of the prevailing German ideal of *Bildung*, aiming to achieve moral and aesthetic refinement in order to fulfill the individual’s spiritual potentials.
- Modernizing and revising Jewish education by adding secular disciplines, such as sciences and languages — into the religious curriculum.
- Revitalizing Jewish culture by introducing elements of European culture, Western values, social customs and conventions into it, and by opening a new chapter in Hebrew letters.
- Alleviating the ‘yoke’ of excessive religious ordinances, customs and practices, and fighting superstitious beliefs and erroneous customs.

These major areas of demands for change started early in the Berlin Haskalah, and typically continued to be listed on the banner of the Maskilim with some modifications and with different intensities for one-hundred years to come.

Introduce Changes through Jewish Education

Education was deemed the prime vehicle for change. One of the early plans for major changes in Jewish education was proposed in 1782 by Naphtali Herz Wessely (1725–1805) in his educational treatise *Divrei Shalom Ve’emet* (Words of Peace and Truth) which had a seminal influence on the development of Haskalah.³

³ Naphtali Herz Wessely, *Divrei Shalom Ve’emet* [Words of Peace and Truth] ([Berlin, 1782]). See discussion on Wessely’s educational reforms in *The Age of Haskalah*, chapter 6, pp. 113–130; *Bema ‘avkei Temurah*, chapter 2, pp. 46–

Wessely's proposal for changes in Jewish curriculum aimed to modify the most important institution of rabbinic Judaism, namely Jewish education. Traditional religious education was the basis for shaping the image of the Jew in the existing rabbinic mold. Now the Haskalah attempted to undermine the rabbinic hold on that institution and to exert its influence so as to produce a modern Jew befitting the envisioned new Haskalah Judaism.

A similar proposal to introduce changes in Jewish education and to establish a modern Jewish school in Königsberg was suggested by another Haskalah activist, Isaac Euchel (1756–1804), in the same year as Wessley's (1782).⁴ Both Wessley's and Euchel's proposals were addressed to the rabbinic and Kehilah establishments, and seemed to operate within the existing rabbinic framework. Yet, there is no doubt that they wanted to modernize Jewish education in a way quite distinct from existing rabbinic orientation. In addition to reorganizing the religious curriculum, as will be mentioned later, Wessely wanted to introduce secular subjects to Jewish schools.

To facilitate the revision in the curriculum Wessely expressed the need to write modern textbooks, and indeed, several of the Maskilim undertook to write and publish such textbooks. They were Aaron Wolfsohn (1754–1835), Juda Leib Ben Zeev (1764–1811), Joel Brill (1762–1802), and others. The opening of a Jewish free school in Berlin, which had a revised curriculum, followed as did many schools in the ensuing years.⁵ Echoes to Wessely's plans were heard in many similar proposals in the nineteenth century.⁶

The Maskilim endeavored to re-educate the Jew to be an enlightened member of the Haskalah, ready to share the envisioned and much hoped for new world of alleged wisdom, brotherhood of men and openness.

These changes came about as the Maskilim advocated and began to adopt some fundamental tenets of European Enlightenment. In general, these tenets were founded on the ideas of rationalism, humanism, tolerance,

81.

⁴ Isaac Euchel, *Sefat Emet* [Language of Truth] (Königsberg, 1782).

⁵ See Mordechat Eliav, *Hahinuch Hayehudi Begermanyah* [Jewish Education in Germany] (Jerusalem, 1961).

⁶ For example, Isaac Baer Levinsohn, *Te'udah Beyisrael* [Testimony in Israel] (Vilna, 1828; facsimile edition: Jerusalem, 1977). See Immanuel Etkes's Introduction "Te'udah Beyisrael — Bein Temurah Lemasoret" [Testimony in Israel — Between Change and Tradition], pp. 6, 17.

and freedom, among others. Embracing these tenets affected the Maskilim's own perception and interpretation of Judaism.

By adopting these basic precepts of the Enlightenment and applying them to their reinterpretation of traditional Judaism, the Maskilim affected the beginning of a major transformation within eighteenth-century Judaism, leading it to the threshold of modernism (a term that requires more discussion),⁷ and to some extent to the threshold of secularism.

Transformation to Haskalah Judaism

The transformation undergone by Haskalah Judaism was manifested overtly and covertly in the writings of the Maskilim. This writer identified several emblematic criteria that are indicative of these underlying changes.⁸

One such criterion identified symptomatic expressions in the Maskilim's own writings, which represented their own awareness of the so-called benevolent new times in Europe. Accordingly, they felt that the changes in the European milieu would eventually affect Jewish society.

The Maskilim's practice of borrowing messianic terminology from the traditional corpus and applying them to the envisioned new age is another sign which marks the occurring changes as perceived in their writings. It coincided with their attempts to re-define Judaism and to revise the Judaic value system in line with the European ethos.

Some of the other typical aspects of the transformation dwelled on the Maskilim's new perception of Jewish history, of the Jewish calendar and of Jewish time, as suggested in the writings of Saul Berlin (1740–1794), a rabbi turned Maskil. The Maskilim's search for happiness *outside* the Judaic parameters was also a significant indicator of the emerging Haskalah Judaism. Even more important was their questioning the need to observe the *mitzvot* while still retaining their Jewish allegiance and adhering to their Jewish identity, as postulated by Isaac Euchel, the editor of *Hame'asef* and one of the founders of the Hebrew Haskalah in Germany.⁹

All indications are that the changes that the Haskalah proposed were prompted by the early Maskilim's desire to resuscitate (traditional) Judaism and to reconstruct it from within.

They were very concerned about the state of Judaism in their times and felt strongly that if they would not address what they considered to be pressing problems which confronted contemporary Judaism, it would not survive.

⁷ See Moshe Pelli, Chapter 1, "Haskalah in Search of Genre: Beginning of Haskalah and Modernity," *In Search of Genre* (Lanham, 2005), pp. 33–82, as well as the introduction.

⁸ *In Search of Genre*, pp. 33–82.

⁹ *Ibid.*

This was implied as early as in 1790, in an article published in *Hame'asef* by the Maskil Mendel Breslau (1761–1827). He called on the rabbis to alleviate the burdensome secondary restrictions in the observance of customs. His stated goal was to ameliorate the deteriorated religious circumstances among his contemporary Jews.¹⁰

Hame'asef, of which Breslau was one of the founding editors, as well as the author of the allegorical drama *Yaldut Uvaharut* (Childhood and Youth), was the mouthpiece of the German Maskilim, and was published intermittently from 1783 to 1797 and from 1809 to 1811.¹¹ According to Breslau's argumentation, the very existence of the Jewish people was in jeopardy. This early call to the rabbis to enact changes was followed by many other demands for religious reforms in the ensuing years.¹²

Following Wessely's treatise on educational reforms, the Italian Maskil Eliyahu Morpurgo (1740–1830), who published several educational articles in *Hame'asef*, stressed the need to introduce changes in Jewish education. He urged rabbis and community leaders in 1786 to adopt the Haskalah and its plans for modern education, warning them to act “before your children’s light is extinguished and before your feet stumble upon the mountains of twilight.”¹³

Haskalah — A Cultural Revolution Intended to Counteract Rabbinical Culture

Having a sense of urgency to act, and having received no positive response from the rabbis, many of the Maskilim intended to counteract the traditional rabbinical culture. In their attempt to revive the Jewish people and its culture, the Maskilim, in general, desired to create a new Jewish identity,

¹⁰ Mendel Breslau, “El Rodfei Tzedek” [To the Pursuers of Justice] *Hame'asef*, VI (1790), pp. 301–314. See the chapter on Breslau in *Bema'avkei Temurah*, p. 171; *The Age of Haskalah*, p. 47, notes 65, 66; Aaron Chorin, *Igeret El Asaf* [A Letter to Asaf] (Prague, 1826), p. 32b.

¹¹ See chapter six below and Moshe Pelli, *Sha'ar Lahaskalah* [The Gate to Haskalah: An Annotated Index to *Hame'asef*, the First Hebrew Journal] (Jerusalem, 2000).

¹² See for example *The Age of Haskalah*, chapter 5, pp. 91–108, on the first reform temple controversy in Hamburg in 1818/9. Demands for religious reform were prevalent in the latter period of Haskalah as expressed by Moshe Leib Lilienblum and Juda Leib Gordon, among others.

¹³ *Hame'asef*, III (1786), p. 131, based on Jeremiah 13:16.

cultivating a modern and updated Jewish orientation. As attested to in the Hebrew texts reviewed below, their efforts followed the ideals advocated by the European Enlightenment in counter distinction to the traditional Jewish identity as adhered to by the rabbinic dictates and practices.

Most of the early Hebrew Maskilim in Germany expressed their wishes to restore Judaism to its pristine splendor; in the classical Hebrew phrase — “לְהַחֲזִיר עֲתָרָה לֵישָׁנָה” (*Lehahazir atarah leyoshnah*). A total acceptance of traditional Judaism was announced by Isaac Euchel, a leading pundit and activist in early Haskalah. He proclaimed that “our heritage is our faith, from which one cannot deviate by turning to the right or to the left.” He then embraced the foundations of the Jewish faith, citing “תּוֹרָה מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם” (*Torah min hashamayim* — the divine origins of the Torah).¹⁴ Of course, such public pronouncements should be scrutinized to check whether they indeed reflected the authentic view point of that Maskil. For it could have been stated for public consumption in order not to antagonize traditional rabbis or moderate Maskilim especially at the beginning of the publication of *Hame'asef*. At any rate, such statements reflected the standpoint of most early Maskilim, professing their adherence to Jewish heritage.

Unquestionably, we can accept Wessely's statement of his intentions in advocating reform in Jewish education. He argued with his traditionalist opponents that he only wanted to “restore the correct customs that had been practiced among us in ancient times and were forgotten as a result of the persecutions.”¹⁵ While we cannot ascertain what exactly Euchel meant by the “divine origin of the Torah,” we definitely can accept Wessely's statement at face value, for he was known for his traditional views. At any rate, it is certain that these Maskilim did not wish to destroy Judaism as such, and many of them — even the more extreme Maskilim — did not reject the classical rabbinic Judaism of talmudic times.

Furthermore, Wessely's argumentations for changes in Jewish education were based on the classical texts. He started by citing from Proverbs that a young lad should be educated in accordance with his capacities, and argued for such changes in the existing educational system. The revised order of learning the sacred texts is based on *Pirkei Avot* (Ethics of the Fathers) (5, 21) which advocated gradual and orderly education: first the Bible, secondly the Mishnah, thirdly the Talmud.

Thus, Wessely advocated resorting to the classical tradition of Jewish education based on *Pirkei Avot*. Yet, he also advocated the introduction of secular studies to the Jewish curriculum. Whether Wessely fully understood

¹⁴ A. P. [Isaac Euchel], “Davar El Hakore Mito'elet Divrei Hayamim Hakadmonim” [A Word to the Reader about the Benefit of Ancient History], *Hame'asef*, I (1783/4), pp. 9–14, 25–30, especially pp. 26–27.

¹⁵ Wessely, *Divrei Shalom Ve'emet*, p. 32 (pagination added).

the implications of his proposed program, which is debated,¹⁶ the traditionalist rabbis did see in it a threat to their authority and the traditional way of practicing Judaism.¹⁷

While citing the classical sources, these Maskilim opposed the exclusive *contemporary* rabbinic interpretation and practice of Judaism and the excessive secondary religious restrictions in customs and ordinances.

Haskalah Judaism – An Enlightened Religion

Numerous Maskilim searched and found in Judaism many aspects of the Enlightenment. Thus, they perceived and conceived of Judaism in terms of the tenets of the European Enlightenment, believing that original Judaism was an enlightened religion of tolerance, openness, liberalism and wisdom. This is how Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786), the exemplary figure of Jewish and Hebrew Haskalah, portrayed ancient Judaism in *Jerusalem* (1783). In his reconstruction of historical Judaism, Mendelssohn perceived of it as a rational and tolerant religion open to continuous change.¹⁸

The prolific writer Isaac Satanow (1732–1804), for one, argued that wisdom, *Hochmah*, prevailed in classical Judaism before Jews and Judaism went into *galut*, exile.¹⁹ Euchel, for his part, expressed his appreciation of the talmudic sages for their love of wisdom, knowledge and reason.²⁰ Similarly, Wessely blamed the decline in secular knowledge and science among the Jews on their political and social conditions in the Diaspora, having been persecuted, deprived of their rights, and restricted in their activities.²¹

Moreover, many of the Maskilim thought of classical Judaism as containing, and definitely tolerating, a multiplicity of views of Halachah —

¹⁶ I argue that Wessely did not fully understand the meaning of his reform in Jewish education. See Pelli, *The Age of Haskalah*, p. 129; *idem*, *Bema'avkei Temurah*, p. 59.

¹⁷ See *Bema'avkei Temurah*, pp. 62–66; cf. Jacob Kats, *Moseret Umashber* [Tradition and Crisis] (Jerusalem, 1963), pp. 303–304.

¹⁸ Moses Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem* (Hanover and London, 1986), pp. 99–103.

¹⁹ Isaac Satanow, *Sefer Hamidot* [Book of Ethics] (Berlin, 1784), pp. 39–41. See Pelli, *Bema'avkei Temurah*, pp. 108–109.

²⁰ [Euchel], “Davar El Hakore Mito'elet Divrei Hayamim Hakadmonim,” *Hame'asef*, I (1783/4), p. 28.

²¹ Pelli, *Bema'avkei Temurah*, p. 18, and the chapter of Satanow, p. 118.

the religious legal system. To prove their view, Mendelssohn, Wessely, Mordechai Gumpel Schnaber (1730/45–1797), a physician and a Maskil who wrote several books in Hebrew,²² and others very eagerly quoted the talmudic proverbial solution to some halachic disputes. It addressed opposing halachic decrees, saying: “אלו ואלו דברי אלהים חיים” (*Elu va’elu divrei elohim hayim* — [The utterances of] both [literally: these and these] are the words of a living God).²³ Namely, the Halachah itself may entertain conflicting and even contradictory decrees.

Of course, at first these Maskilim did not express their anti-contemporary rabbinic culture openly so as not to alienate some moderate Maskilim or some rabbis. Thus, typically, the editors of *Hame’asef* presented themselves in *Nahal Habesor* (The Brook ‘Besor,’ or Good Tidings), the prospectus of the journal, as moderates, who were trained as talmudists and were able to discuss Halachah “according to the true פשט” (*peshat*) — the straight-forward, common-sense interpretation of the text. However, this traditional term, *peshat*, for one mode of textual interpretation, turned out to be a *code* word for interpretation of the text according to the concepts of Haskalah.²⁴

Haskalah’s New Hebrew Culture Adopts Rabbinic Forms

Tracing the Maskilim’s writings and actions in creating the new Hebrew culture, we note some very significant trends. It appears that the Maskilim emulated some of the existing structures, procedures and conventions in rabbinic Judaism and adopted them to their needs and goals.

It was natural for them to do so, as many of them were raised and educated in the traditional rabbinic milieu. Yet, one should not ignore the fact that it was a good tactic to use the familiar format and easily recognized style in appealing to the moderates and to the unsuspecting among the neophytes. Whether they acted out of habit or tactic, I am inclined to believe that the Hebrew Maskilim were true to their intention to reinterpret and redefine Judaism while still embracing it and adhering to its essence. Breslau’s cited call to the rabbis alluded, perhaps as a tactic, that halachic changes should be enacted by the rabbis themselves. Similarly, as

²² See chapter VII on Schnaber in Pelli, *The Age of Haskalah*, pp. 131–150.

²³ Breslau, *Hame’asef*, IV (1790), p. 301; see *Bema’avkei Temurah*, p. 170. Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem*, p. 101; N. H. Wessely, *Yen Levanon* [The Wine of Lebanon], II (Vienna, 1829), pp. 26a–b; *idem*, *Divrei Shalom Ve’emet*, III (Berlin, 1782–85), p. 12a; *idem*, *Yen Levanon* (Warsaw, 1914), p. 14; Mordechai Schnaber, *Ma’amar Hatorah Vehahochmah* [An Essay of the Torah and Wisdom] (London, 1771), p. 6; see also: *The Age of Haskalah*, p. 46, n. 56.

²⁴ *Nahal Habesor* [The Brook ‘Besor,’ or Good Tidings], bound with *Hame’asef*, I (1783/4), p. 3.

mentioned before, Wessely's platform of educational reform in *Divrei Shalom Ve'emet* was addressed to the rabbis.

Did the Maskilim have a definite, detailed plan for the changes they wished to introduce into rabbinic Judaism? Most probably the answer is that they did not have such a detailed plan for all changes. However, the accumulation of their statements and actions about changes do indicate a clear and definite trend.

Yet, it is obvious that in some areas of their activities, they did have a sorted out plan. For example, in education, Wessely's *Divrei Shalom Ve'emet* did articulate a solid plan. The Maskilim's activity in the *Be'ur* project, Mendelssohn's translation into German and commentary of the Pentateuch, to be discussed later, had a definite plan, as delineated by Shlomo Dubno (1738–1813) in the prospectus *Alim Litrufah* (Leaves for Healing) (1778).²⁵

As to the concept of changes they aspired to introduce to Jewish society in general, we may get some inkling about them from Isaac Satanow's utopia, *Divrei Rivot* (Matters of Dispute), to be cited later, in which he portrayed the parameters of the envisioned Jewish society of the future that realized some of the goals of the Haskalah.²⁶

Thus, the Maskilim began to explore their version of Haskalah Judaism. The process of transformation to the Judaism of the Haskalah went through some subtle changes. While the traditional role of the rabbi as a spiritual leader of the Jews — including the Maskilim — was still recognized, the Maskilim sought to replace his authoritative figure with the figure of the ḥacham — the writer-poet, or learned Maskil — as the exemplary personality, and even as the spiritual leader, in Haskalah Judaism.

It was no longer the figure of the rabbi whose expertise was the study of Talmud and Halachah as the ideal personality that ought to be emulated. Instead, there emerged the personality of the philosopher-scholar who became the exemplary figure of the Haskalah.

Attesting to the shift in the exemplary figure of Haskalah Judaism are the Maskilim's biographies that were written on the leading figures of the Haskalah: The biography of Moses Mendelssohn written by Euchel and the biography of Wessely written by David Friedrichsfeld (1755?–1810).²⁷

²⁵ Shlomo Dubno, *Alim Litrufah* [Leaves for Healing] (Amsterdam, 1778).

²⁶ See *Divrei Rivot*, in footnote 28 below.

²⁷ Isaac Euchel, *Toldot Rabenu Hehacham Moshe Ben Menahem* [The Life Story

At first, the leading Maskilim were given honorific rabbinic titles, following the practice in traditional Judaism. Moses Mendelssohn was titled מורהנו הרב (*Morenu Harav*); the acronym assigned to him was רמב"ן (*Rambeman*), and רבנו משה בן מנהם (*Rabenu Moshe ben Menaḥem*), a hybrid between רמב"ם (*Rambam*), the honorific initials of Maimonides' name, and רמבָן (*Ramban*) — Nachmanides.

The Ideal Model – The Philosopher-Scholar

The ideal model to be emulated was no longer the rabbi or the yeshiva student engaged in the traditional study of Talmud, but the philosopher-scholar-writer Maskil. His declared goal was to pursue חוכמה (*Hochmah*) — wisdom and knowledge — and to search for Truth so as to achieve self-fulfillment and human perfection, on the personal as well as on the societal level, while still excelling in the study of Judaism.

The rabbi was not eliminated in the envisioned Jewish Haskalah society, as perceived, for example, in Satanow's utopian sketch *Divrei Rivot* published in 1793.²⁸ In it, the image of the rabbi began to take a drastic change. First, rabbis are elected by the people in this envisioned utopian Jewish society of the Haskalah. In addition to their scholarship in Torah and religious laws, rabbis must know languages, be cultured, erudite, and knowledgeable in worldly matters.

This trend is exemplified on another level of perception and expertise as Saul Berlin complained about his fellow rabbis' lack of practical knowledge and their total insensitivity in human relations and ignorance in day-to-day practical life.²⁹

Berlin argued that contemporary rabbis neglect the study of the Hebrew Bible, they do not know grammar and Hebrew language in general, and that they are detached from the people. Their sermons are mixed with Kabbalah which is not understood by the people, and they are totally ignorant of *Hochmot*, namely, secular studies.

The rabbi's role, duties and responsibilities were later on continued to be discussed in the Haskalah. One of the more important treatments of the subjects was done by David Caro (1782–1839) in *Techunat Harabanim* (Characteristics of the Rabbis), published in 1820. In it, he drew a Maskil's ideal image of the modern rabbi and his duties: righteousness, having an open-minded understanding of the Torah, and knowledge of secular

of Our Master the Sage M.B.M.] (Berlin, 1788), and David Friedrichsfeld, *Zecher Tzadik* [Commemoration of a Righteous Man] (Amsterdam, 1809).

²⁸ [Isaac Satanow], *Divrei Rivot* [Matters of Dispute], I ([Berlin, 1793?]) p. 48a.

²⁹ E.M.T. [Saul Berlin], [Review of *Marpe Lashon* by Raphael Hacohen], *Hame'asef*, VI (1790), pp. 362–380. See discussion below.

subjects, science and languages. The ideal rabbi would deliver sermons in a pleasant language and in humanistic spirit, would teach *Hochmot* to his students, and will be able to present Judaism properly as befitting the modern time and place.³⁰

In the ensuing years, as Haskalah evolved, the figure of an active Maskil, Shlomo Yehudah Rapoport (1790–1867), was considered to be a Maskil-rabbi *par excellence*, when he was offered the position of rabbi in Tarnopol, and later as Dayan in Prague, as depicted in the scholarly journal *Kerem Hemed*.³¹

Later, in Hebrew literature, the fictional image of a modern maskilic rabbi was portrayed by Mordechai Brandstaedter in his short story “Mordechai Kisowitz.” He is depicted as “Doctor Markus,” who graduated from a modern rabbinic seminary with ordination and a doctorate in philosophy.³²

While the post of the rabbi had been under scrutiny, some encroachment on his role began to emerge. The venerable institution, or practice, of the traditional rabbinic approbations was appropriated by the Maskilim and modified to the needs and character of the Haskalah. As is known, the approbations served several purposes: as a form of ‘censorship’ to have rabbinic authorities approve the contents and the author of a book, and to serve as copyright.³³ Now the Maskilim began soliciting their own

³⁰ Pelli, *The Age of Haskalah*, p. 47, n. 62, p. 92, n. 9; [David Caro], *Techunat Harabanim* [Characteristics of the Rabbis], vol II of *Brit Emet* [Covenant of Truth] ([Dessau], 1820), pp. 89, 146.

³¹ *Kerem Hemed*, IV (1839), pp. 241–249. See further discussion in chapter eight below.

³² Mordechai Brandstaedter, “Mordechai Kisowitz,” *Kol Sipurei M. D. Brandstaedter* [The Complete Stories of M.D.B.], I (Krakow, 1895; facsimile edition, Tel Aviv, 1968), pp. 3–24; first published: “Mordechai Kisowitz,” *Hashahar*, I, part 2 (No. 7, 1869), pp. 17–31.

³³ On approbations, see *The Age of Haskalah*, p. 35, n. 3. See also Shimon Tudar, “Haskamot Al Hasefer Bifkufat Nahaskalah” [Approbations of Books in the Period of Haskalah], *Bamishor* [On the Plane], III (June 12, 1942), p. 7; Nahum Rakover, “Hayesod Hamishpati Shel Isur Hahadpasah Ba‘haskamot’ Lisefarim” [The Legal Basis of Republishing Prohibition in the ‘Approbations’ to Books], *Proceedings of the Fifth World Congress of Jewish Studies*, III (Jerusalem, 1972), pp. 333–343; Zeev Gries, *Hasefer Kesochen Tarbut* [The Book as an Agent of Culture] (Tel Aviv, 2002), pp. 135–136, 166–168.

maskilic approvals from the leading pundits of the Haskalah. Mendelssohn's *Be'ur*, the commentary and translation into German in Hebrew characters of the Pentateuch, was criticized in traditional circles because he did not solicit the proper approbations from the authoritative rabbis of the time. Mendelssohn did obtain letters of approval from Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Levin of Berlin and his son the Maskil, Rabbi Saul Berlin (Levin). The third was Wessely's maskilic approbation to Mendelssohn's *Netivot Hashalom* (Paths of Peace), namely the *Be'ur*, which carried a token message in tone, tenor and 'tune' by adding a flowery maskilic poem to his modern approbation.³⁴

A step further in the use of the approbation in a definitive maskilic way occurred in Baruch Linda's (1759?–1849) introductory book to general sciences — natural sciences, physics, biology, the planets and geography, — *Reisheet Limudim* (Beginning of Learning). The book, which was first partially serialized in *Hame'asef*, had approbations by the two doctors, authorities on science: Mordechai Bloch and Mordechai (Marcus) Herz, and by the Maskil *par excellence*, Wessely.³⁵ Saul Berlin's *Mitzpe Yokte'el* (Watchtower of Yokte'el), a polemic against the traditionalist rabbi Raphael Hacohen, displayed an approbation by none other than David Friedländer, a supporter of Haskalah and a radical Maskil. This trend continued throughout the nineteenth century.³⁶ For example, Shalom Hacohen (1771–1845) included in his Hebrew language book a short approbation by a fellow Maskil, Isaac Euchel.³⁷

Maskilim's Intrusion into Halachah

More offensive was the Maskilim's invasion of the exclusive domain of the rabbis in the field of responsa in halachic matters as a demonstration of the formers' knowledge, interest and expertise to express a binding opinion in Jewish laws and customs. This was exemplified first in the 1770s — and then in the 1780s and 1790s — in the case of the burial of the dead controversy, in which the Maskilim sided with the authorities' attempts to delay the burial of the Jewish dead. The rabbis, of course, insisted on the tradition of burial on the same day of death. This issue continued to stay in the maskilic limelight for some time.

³⁴ *Netivot Hashalom* [Paths of Peace], *Sefer Breisheet* [Genesis], Moses Mendelssohn, ed., I (Berlin, 1783), titled "Mehalel Re'a" [In Praise of a Friend].

³⁵ Baruch Linda, *Reisheet Limudim* [Beginning of Learning] (Berlin, 1788).

³⁶ Saul Berlin, *Mitzpe Yokte'el* [Watchtower of Yokte'el] (Berlin, 1789).

³⁷ Shalom Hacohen, *Torat Lashon Ivrit* [Teaching the Hebrew Language], II (Dessau, 1807), a short approbation by Isaac Euchel, dated Berlin, 1802.

It was a test case in which the Maskilim tested their power in public — publishing their articles in *Hame'asef* and in pamphlets — to intervene in halachic matters. Mendelssohn, Euchel, Joel Brill and Dr. Marcus Herz argued on behalf of the Haskalah against the traditionalist rabbis.³⁸ Some of the Maskilim employed halachic argumentation, citing early talmudic sources as precedents. They very cleverly referred to the prevailing customs and conventions sanctified by the rabbis as actually *deviating* from the ancient Judaic norm. Thus, they implied that *they* represented original Judaism rather than their contemporary rabbis.

The Maskilim continued to resort to the Halachah itself, citing its sources in the original texts, appropriating it from the exclusive authority of the rabbi.³⁹

Attempting to practice what they preached, some Maskilim, and Euchel among them, established a Kehilah-like society, *Gesellschaft der Freunde*, which served as a social framework for Maskilim who rejected the traditional Kehilah. Euchel served as this society's director.⁴⁰ Even previously, the Maskilim established literary societies that initiated the publication of *Hame'asef*. They deviated from the traditional roles of the institutions of the Kehilah, which were mostly religiously-oriented. In 1783, the Maskilim founded *Hevrat Dorshei Leshon Ever* — The Society of the Seekers of the Hebrew Language. It was changed in 1786 to The Society for the Seekers of Goodness and Virtue, or: Resourcefulness.⁴¹

This society stated its goal in a published platform that advocated the promotion of the Haskalah ideology. It wished to establish similar chapters in other cities and countries, thus forming a substitute to the established structure of the Jewish Kehilah.⁴² Similar modern societies that served the intellectual community of Maskilim were established in the nineteenth century, such as *Hevrat To'elet* (Beneficent Society) in Amsterdam.⁴³

³⁸ On the burial of the dead controversy, see *The Age of Haskalah*, pp. 207–211.

³⁹ See Pelli, *The Age of Haskalah*, ch. V, pp. 91–108; cf. Katz, *Mosoret Umashber*, p. 307. See footnote 74 below.

⁴⁰ See *The Age of Haskalah*, pp. 301–302.

⁴¹ See Katz, *Masoret Umashber*, p. 301.

⁴² Itzik Euchel, et al., *Tavnit Hevrat Hatov Vehatushiyah* [The Structure of the Society for Goodness and Virtue, or: Resourcefulness] (Königsberg and Berlin, 1788). Copy found at the Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem.

⁴³ *Hevrat To'elet* (Beneficent Society) was established in Amsterdam in 1815. On its activities see citations in Pelli, *Haskalah Umodernity* [Haskalah and

Continuing to tread on rabbinic turf, the journal *Hame'asef* published a halachic discussion on the question whether there is any halachic prohibition to get the inoculation (sent to them by Mendelssohn).⁴⁴ On a more acrimonious issue, some Maskilim — Mendelssohn among them — questioned and rejected the rabbinic authority to excommunicate members of the community.⁴⁵

A unique case of the use — some call it abuse⁴⁶ — of the sanctified rabbinic responsa for a maskilic-oriented purpose in deviation from the traditional use was made by Saul Berlin in 1793. A practicing rabbi and a clandestinely professed Maskil, Berlin composed his own responsa book, *Besamim Rosh* (Incense of Spices), which he attributed to the medieval halachic authority ROSH, Rabbi Asher ben Yehiel. Utilized as a literary and a combative tool against his rabbinic adversaries, this book of pseudo-responsa was also used by Berlin to advocate some religious reforms while parodying the rabbinic mindset and style.⁴⁷

The New Haskalah Culture: Re-orienting Jewish Culture

In addition to adopting and revising existing rabbinic practices and conventions, the new Haskalah culture envisioned re-orienting Jewish creative energies and spiritual resources in a new direction along the lines of the Enlightenment. The thrust of this new culture aimed to revive the Hebrew language and to create a new and modern Hebrew literature. Both language and literature were to become the new media intended to cultivate aesthetic and imaginative appreciation, fostering a new path for the new Jew.

While rabbinic Judaism concentrated on Halachah, legalism, and on the study of the Talmud, Haskalah focused on reviving Jewish artistic creativity, which the Maskilim found in early Hebrew creative heritage, namely, in the Hebrew Bible.

Revival of Hebrew in the Haskalah, which occurred one hundred years before Eliezer Ben Yehuda, considered to be the “reviver of the Hebrew

Modernism] (Israel, 2007), ch. 4, p. 196, notes 20, 21; Shmuel Mulder, *Kitzur Rishumei Ha'asefot Lehevrat To'elet* [Minutes of the Meetings of the Society ‘To’elet’] (Amsterdam, 1817).

⁴⁴ A. L., “Teshuba Al Dvar Ha’inoculatzion” [An Answer Concerning the Inoculation], *Hame'asef*, IV (1788), pp. 2–9.

⁴⁵ On the issue of excommunication, see Moshe Pelli, *Moshe Mendelssohn: Bechavlei Masoret* [Moses Mendelssohn: Bonds of Tradition] (Tel Aviv, 1972), pp. 52–56.

⁴⁶ On the critical rabbinic reaction to S. Berlin’s responsa see next footnote.

⁴⁷ See chapters on Berlin in *The Age of Haskalah*, pp. 171–189, and in *Bema’avkei Temurah*, pp. 140–165.

language,” has to be examined vis-à-vis the general concept of language as perceived during the Enlightenment. Language was deemed to be reflective of the spiritual and ethical condition of the person or the people who speak it. Following Leibnitz, the enlighteners considered language to be a “mirror of the soul”⁴⁸ and thus reflective of one’s ethical standard and the culture of his people. Juda Leib Ben Zeev asserted that the beauty of a given language and its state of perfection serve as proof for the perfection of the people who speak that language.⁴⁹

This was one of the reasons why the Maskilim were criticizing the use of Yiddish, which they associated with the traditional Polish rabbis and the Melamdim’s (religious teachers) milieu imported from Eastern Europe. To the German Maskilim, Yiddish was “a corrupt language” when compared to the purity of the German language.⁵⁰

In their approach to the use of language, the Maskilim attempted to adhere tenaciously to the principles of their new culture. First and foremost, the new Hebrew culture demanded linguistic purity, in opposition to the rabbinic style that incorporated a mixture of Aramaic and Hebrew. Saul Berlin, for example, lashed out against rabbi Raphael Hacohen’s book, *Marpe Lashon* (Curing Language), in *Hame’asef*, for his awkward, incoherent and confounding style.⁵¹ Instead, the Maskilim endeavored to use biblical Hebrew for creative writing and medieval Hebrew for philosophy and essays. Correct use of grammar was also advocated to counteract the disregard of grammar in some, but not all, contemporary rabbinic circles. While florid language was definitely desired, the Hebrew enlighteners opposed the rabbinic idiom made of esoteric and mixed מלייה (*melitzah*) — euphuism. Rather, they preferred grandiloquent, sublime and poetical language, which was more elegant and modern at the time, as will be discussed in chapter five.

⁴⁸ Eric A. Blackall, *The Emergence of German as a Literary Language 1700–1775* (Cambridge, 1959), pp. 4–5. See discussion in Moshe Pelli, *Dor Hame’asfin Beshahar Hahaskalah* [The Circle of *Hame’asef* Writers at the Dawn of Haskalah] (Israel, 2001), p. 185, note 25.

⁴⁹ Juda Leib Ben Zeev, “Hakdaramah” [Introduction], *Talmud Lashon Ivri* [Learning the Hebrew Language] (Vienna, 1827), p. 3b; *Bema’avkei Temurah*, p. 40.

⁵⁰ See Moses Mendelssohn, *Or Linetivah* [Light for Path] (Berlin, 1783), p. 50 (pagination added). See *The Age of Haskalah*, p. 78, n. 17.

⁵¹ E.M.T. [Saul Berlin], [Review of *Marpe Lashon* by Raphael Hacohen], *Hame’asef*, V1 (1790), pp. 362–380, esp. pp. 371, 379.

By rejecting the traditional use of language in rabbinic writings and introducing their concept of a ‘modern’ Hebrew language, the Maskilim manifested their self-image and distinctive role as innovators vis-à-vis the traditional elements of the Jewish establishment. To them, language meant identity, and ‘modern’ Hebrew signified their identity as Maskilim — as an adjective not a noun; as they described themselves, “אָחֻזָת מֵרְעִים מַשְׂכִילִים” (*Ahuzat mere’im maskilim* — a group of maskilic friends).⁵²

Revival of the language was manifested by a multiplicity of articles and books about Hebrew grammar and synonyms by many of the Maskilim, such as Naphtali Herz Wessely, Hayim Cöslin (?–1832), Juda Leib Ben Zeev, Joel Brill, and many others. They scrutinized biblical texts from a new, updated linguistic angle that was quite distinguished from the rabbinic way.⁵³ It is at this point that the secularization of the language began to emerge as well, as Hebrew borrowed terms from the sacred texts and used them in modern contexts.⁵⁴

Renewal of Hebrew Letters: Examining the Classical Literature

Rejuvenating the Hebrew language was an enormous undertaking by itself, but for the Maskilim it was emblematic of a related, yet more significant, revival. It was the revival and renewal of Hebrew literature as a modern medium of creative expression serving and contributing to the newly envisioned Hebrew culture.

Facing the impressive literary and creative output of the German *Aufklärung* and the European Enlightenment, the leaders of Hebrew Haskalah were desirous of renewal and creativity in their own revived culture.⁵⁵ Schnaber referred to the need to expand Hebrew culture, saying that “the nations around us [...] would not rest from making books without end, each one speaks and composes in the language of his people in order to expand it; and why [...] [do we] forsake our holy tongue”?⁵⁶

Concurrent with, and perhaps even as a prerequisite to, creating a new literature, Hebrew writers and critics undertook to examine and reinterpret the classical works of Jewish heritage. They paid special attention to those

⁵² *Nahal Habesor*, p. 3.

⁵³ See discussion on the revival of Hebrew during the Haskalah period in Pelli, *Dor Hame’asim Beshahar Hahaskalah*, chapter on Hebrew, pp. 177–195; *The Age of Haskalah*, chapter IV on Hebrew, pp. 73–91.

⁵⁴ See discussion in sources listed in note 53; examples of the secularization of Hebrew by Saul Berlin, see Pelli, *Sugot Vesugyot Besifrut Hahaskalah Ha’ivrit* [Kinds of Genres in Haskalah Literature: Types and Topics] (Tel Aviv, 1999), pp. 157–160.

⁵⁵ Schnaber, *Ma’amar Hatorah Vehaḥochmah*, p. 5.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

writings in the Jewish corpus that were known to, and even venerated by, Western culture, especially the Hebrew Scriptures. As proclaimed by the editors of *Hame'asef* in the prospectus of the journal, it was their intention to “expand the knowledge of our holy tongue within the people of God and to show its beauty to all the nations.”⁵⁷

A new approach to the Bible: This new approach to the Hebrew Bible was the major incentive behind the *Be'ur*, initiated by Mendelssohn and continued by his followers. The keen observer Solomon Maimon (1753–1800) identified this goal of “חברות דורשי לשון עברן” (*Hevrat Dorshei Leshon Ever* — the Society of the Seekers of Hebrew), the group of Maskilim around *Hame'asef*, saying that they undertook to replace “the twisted rabbinic commentary of the Scriptures” and “to introduce a rational exegesis.”⁵⁸

Likewise, another observer of and active participant in early Haskalah, Saul Berlin, complained about rabbis who distort the biblical text because they abhor grammar.⁵⁹ The *Be'ur* by Mendelssohn and several of his followers was a deviation from the rabbinic approach to the Bible, even though it still cited traditional commentaries. Mendelssohn’s introduction to the *Be'ur* highlighted the traditions concerning the writing of the Torah and its past translations into various languages, and presented a thorough analysis of biblical Hebrew grammar and syntax. Even though Mendelssohn professed his belief in the divine origins of the Torah, his translation was nevertheless innovative in its orientation, tenor and methodology, when compared to the rabbinic approach.

Shnayim Mikra Ve'ehad Targum: And another note about the *Be'ur*: Instead of the rabbinic traditional use of Aramaic to engage in studying and understanding the Torah, known as “מקרא ואחד תרגום” (*Shnayim mikra ve'ehad targum* — [read] the Bible twice [in Hebrew] and once in [Aramaic] translation), namely, the obligation, or custom, to read the Torah portion of the week on the Sabbath, reciting the Hebrew text twice and once

⁵⁷ *Nahal Habesor*, p. 5.

⁵⁸ Shlomo Maimon, *Hayei Shlomo Maimon* (Tel Aviv, 1953), p. 229; Solomon Maimon, *An Autobiography* (London, 1888; reprinted: Urbana and Chicago, 2001), p. 285.

⁵⁹ E.M.T. [Saul Berlin], [Review of *Marpe Lashon* by Raphael Hacohen], *Hame'asef*, VI (1790), p. 370.

in Aramaic; now the Maskilim offered their competitive version of study through translation.⁶⁰

The *Be'ur*'s translation into German in Hebrew characters was intended to be used by the reading public and students in order to understand the full and correct meaning of the text, although not as a religious obligation. Rabbi Yechezkel Landau, who did not object to Susmann Glogau's Yiddish translation of the Pentateuch (saying that "it was not that deep and everyone could understand it"), expressed his opposition to the German translation because he thought it was a tool to teach German rather than Torah.⁶¹

Consequently, the *Be'ur* paved the way to a modern, up-to-date approach to the study of the Bible among the Maskilim.

Aesthetics: The new treatment of the Bible highlighted the aesthetics and beauty of biblical poetry, exemplified in Mendelssohn's discussion and commentary on שירת הים (*Shirat Hayam*) — Song of Moses — in Exodus.

While traditional commentaries were not oblivious to the literary and poetical qualities of the Hebrew Bible, Mendelssohn's poetics was not based on traditional discussion. Instead they relied on his own insights as an aesthetician and on contemporary German *Aufklärung* writing, such as Herder's treatise on biblical poetry, *Vom Geist der Ebräischen Poësie*.⁶²

Additional Works on the Bible: Following in Mendelssohn's footsteps, Maskilim such as Juda Leib Ben Zeev and Shlomo Loewisohn (1789–1821) deviated from the rabbinic approach to the study of the Bible. Ben Zeev's *Mavo El Mikra'ei Kodesh* (Introduction of the Holy Scriptures) and Loewisohn's *Melitzat Yeshurun* (The Rhetoric of Jeshurun) are based on historical, literary, aesthetic and grammatical discussion and analysis in a modern, timely, organized and scholarly manner.⁶³

This approach to the Hebrew Bible follows the same maskilic pattern of selecting an existing rabbinic format and replacing it with its modern, maskilic counterpart.

⁶⁰ Brachot 8a; *Shulhan Aruch Orah Hayim*, part III, item 285.

⁶¹ *Hame'asef*, III (1786), p. 143: "The German is very profound to such an extent that only experts in German grammar are accustomed to." Thus, he wrote, the time is spent mostly on the German language and the student will not learn Torah. Consequently, "our Torah will serve as a handmaid for the study of German and [the students] would not have the knowledge of the Hebrew text."

⁶² Johann Gottfried Herder, *Vom Geist der Ebräischen Poesie*, II (Gotha, 1890), originally published in 1782/3.

⁶³ Juda Leib Ben Zeev, *Mavo El Mikra'ei Kodesh* [Introduction of the Holy Scriptures] (Vienna, 1810); Shlomo Loewisohn, *Melitzat Yeshurun* [The Rhetoric of Jeshurun] (Vienna, 1816).

Revival of Modern Hebrew Literature

The Maskilim proceeded to introduce new concepts of Hebrew letters that were based on the literary aesthetics and poetics of the Bible and on contemporary European literatures. They envisioned the creation of a new type of literature, which we now call modern Hebrew literature. Their efforts toward renewal of *belles lettres* were channeled in two ways. First, they undertook upon themselves to introduce new types of literary genres and modes of writing, emulating those that were in vogue in contemporary European literatures. Second, they undertook to re-introduce existing modes in the corpus of classical Hebrew literature re-presented in their modern ways. In so doing, they charted a new course for their creative writing.⁶⁴

While re-forming their new concept of literature, the Maskilim evaluated existing forms of traditional writings and selected their own modes of literary expression. Consequently, they rejected several historical belletristic genres of literature of yore, which they deemed unfit for their revised concept of language and literature. One such example is the Maskilim's rejection of the *piyutim* — the medieval liturgical poetry — that were part and parcel of rabbinic Judaism and occupied an important place in the prayerbooks and *Mahzorim*, the High Holy Days and the three festivals prayerbooks.

Poetry: The Maskilim's dismissal of the *piyutim* as used in prayers, or even as a historical genre, was a significant step because it reflected their position in the newly cultivated aesthetics of poetry. This was deemed to be "God's gift implanted in man's soul" — to use Wessely's words — a concept that was suggested by Herder.⁶⁵ The newly created maskilic poetry — especially long biblical epics — drew its vocabulary and structure from biblical poetry, as did some biblical drama which the Maskilim wrote.

A New Approach to Judaic Sources: Study of the Hebrew Bible

This trend of Hebrew Haskalah in forming its new culture marked a new approach to Judaic textual sources. It indicated a shift from the study of the

⁶⁴ See Pelli, Introduction, *In Search of Genre*, pp. 11–31.

⁶⁵ Naphtali Herz Wessely, "Petihat Hameshorer" [Poet's Preface], *Shirei Tiferet* [Songs of Glory] (Prague, 1809; first edition: 1789), p. 5 (pagination added). See Johann Gottfried Herder, *Vom Geist der Ebräischen Poesie*, II, S. 3, 23–24, and discussion in chapter four below.

Talmud, as practiced traditionally in rabbinic Judaism, to a concentration on the Hebrew Bible. Saul Berlin, for one, criticized those rabbinic scholars “who only study the Talmud all their life, while the written Torah is a sealed book for them.”⁶⁶ Wessely, too, criticized the notion expressed in some rabbinic circles that “whosoever studies Talmud does not need to study the Bible, [and] Mishnah [...] because all is included in the Talmud.”⁶⁷

The traditional study of the Talmud with emphasis on *pilpul*, casuistry, as practiced in most rabbinic circles, was to be revised, and a new, organized and gradual curriculum was proposed. Wessely, as mentioned early, advocated in *Words of Peace and Truth* to go back to the classical curriculum that follows the original mishnaic order of religious instruction “במקרה, במשנה, בתלמוד” (*Bemikra, bemishnah, betalmud* — first study Bible, then Mishnah and only then Talmud).⁶⁸ It is important to note that this Maskil advocated returning to the traditional custom based on classical sources.

Even in the study of the Talmud, maskilic educators were extracting moral and ethical elements from it — rather than halachic ones — that fit the spiritual climate of the Enlightenment. Accordingly, the pages of Hebrew textbooks and readers were full of talmudic moral stories, midrashic agadot (homiletic), and maxims of the rabbis. Several sections of *Bikurei Ha’itim*, the Haskalah journal published in Vienna in the 1820s, discussed in chapter seven, featured moral stories from the Talmud.⁶⁹

Haskalah Judaism on Ethics and Morality, Tenets of Judaism

Removing ethics from the exclusive realm of religion, Haskalah — very much like the Enlightenment — adopted morality and ethics as its own guidepost. Wessely, Satanow and others published their versions of *ספר המידות* (*Sefer Hamidot*) — book of ethics — highlighting the ideal moral attributes of man, as perceived by the Haskalah. They concentrated on those

⁶⁶ E.M.T. [Saul Berlin], [Review of *Marpe Lashon* by Raphael Hacohen], *Hame’asef*, VI (1790), p. 369: “...for they say, what do we have to do with the Bible, since the Talmud is a mixture of Bible, Mishnah and Gemara, and we fulfill our duty by studying the Talmud alone.”

⁶⁷ Wessely, *Rav Tuv Levet Israel* [Great Goodness for the House of Israel], vol. II of *Divrei Shalom Ve’emet* (Berlin, 1785²), p. 12b.

⁶⁸ Wessely, *Divrei Shalom Ve’emet*, p. 34; *Rav Tuv Levet Israel*, p. 14a: refers to Mikra, Mishnah, Talmud as “the triple cord that would not tear”; *Reḥovot* [Streets], vol. IV of *Divrei Shalom Ve’emet*, p. 21a: citing Kidushin, p. 30a: “Shlish bemikra, shlish bemishnah, shlish betalmud” [One third Bible, one third Mishnah, one third Talmud].

⁶⁹ For example, *Bikurei Ha’itim*, I (1820/1), pp. 27–28, 29–30.

precepts that showed Judaic morality, humanism, and the brotherhood of man, common to the Enlightenment, rather than strictly unique aspects typical of traditional Judaism. Wessely, for one, recommended that books on morality be written and be taught in *בית המדרש* (*Bet hamidrash*), the house of learning and in schools.⁷⁰

Tenets of Judaism: In a similar vein, the Maskilim endeavored to explore, study and explain the tenets of Judaism as they understood them, and in so doing to delineate their version of Haskalah Judaism. Following Wessely's proposal to write books on "אמונות ודעות" (*Emunot vede'ot*), beliefs and opinions,⁷¹ Haskalah writers published textbooks of modern and traditional texts, which were in effect introductions to Judaism, emphasizing its tenets.⁷² (More on these textbooks in chapter two.) In contrast to rabbinic Judaism, faith was cultivated rather than merely precepts.

Prayer books: An important deviation from the rabbinic practice was initiated by several Maskilim with regard to the traditional prayer book. Euchel and Friedländer, for example, translated the prayers into German in order to make them accessible and understood by all.⁷³ The arguments for use of the prayer book in German in the services were offered later on during the Hamburg reform temple controversy. They were based on the rabbinic phrase: "שמע – בכל לשון שאתה שומע" (*Shema — bechol lashon she'atah shome'a* — [the prayer] Hear [O Israel] [may be said] in any language that one knows). Others employed the dictum "תפילה בכל לשון" (*Tefilah bechol lashon* — a prayer may be said in other languages),⁷⁴ implying that one can pray in any language not necessarily in Hebrew.

⁷⁰ *Divrei Shalom Ve'emet*, p. 22.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁷² Juda Leib Ben Zeev, *Yesodei Hadat Kolel Ikarei Ha'emunah* [The Foundations of Religion Including the Tenets of Faith] (Vienna, 1823³). In the introduction the author explains the need for such a book for the study of the principles of faith. See Shalom Hacohen, *Shorshei Emunah* [Elements of Faith] (London, 1815), bilingual edition; was published also in English in 1817.

⁷³ Isaac Abraham Euchel, *Gebete der hochdeutschen und polnischen Juden* (Königsberg, 1786). David Friedländer published his translation of the prayerbook on the same year.

⁷⁴ Brachot 13; Sota pp. 32b, 33a. Eliezer Liebermann, *Or Nogah* [Light of Splendor], I (Dessau, 1818), pp. 8–9. He quotes Maimonides: "All blessings may be said in the language which one understands" (*ibid.*, p. 5). Meir Israel Bresslau, *Herev Nokemet Nekam Brit* [A Sword Avenging the Vengeance of Covenant] ([Dessau, 1819]), p. 12: "Shema Israel, bechol lashon she'atah

The ‘Jewish book shelf’ has changed: The results of the Maskilim’s intellectual efforts to define and form their own concept of modern Judaism were noticed on the Jewish book shelf. One of the main objectives of Hebrew Haskalah was to re-shuffle the books on the Jewish book shelf — which has recently become a popular term, known as “ארון הספרים היהודי היהודי” (*Aron hasefarim hayehudi*).

The Maskilim established their publishing house in Berlin, *Defus Hevrat Hinuch Ne’arim* — דפוס חברה חינוך נערם — The Printing Press of the Society for the Education of Youth), so that they may be independent of any pressure and could print their own books. This publishing house undertook to publish original creative works, republish classical and medieval works of primary texts and philosophy with the Maskilim’s modern commentaries, and books on contemporary issues.⁷⁵ A list of their published books, attached to the book *Ein Mishpat* (Fountain of Justice) (1796),⁷⁶ is quite impressive, and is indicative of their new orientation. (See also chapter two on the republication of Haskalah books.)

In conclusion, the transformation to Haskalah Judaism was a long and complicated process. At times, the struggle for change appeared as a *Kulturkampf*, whereupon some Maskilim would wage attacks on the rabbis and vice versa. Euchel vehemently exclaimed in 1786 that “not everyone who grows a beard is god-fearing, and not everyone who leans over books is a lover of Torah.”⁷⁷ Wolfsohn, even more of a foe of contemporary rabbis, lashed out acrimoniously in 1794 against those who observe nonsensical practices and superstitious customs, and refers to them by the derogatory term “חמור חמורותיים” (*Hamor hamortayim* — two-fold donkey).⁷⁸

The eighteenth-century German Haskalah set the tone and gave the cue to the other Haskalah centers in Central and Eastern Europe in the nineteenth century to follow, implement, revise or even reject the initial suggestions of the German Haskalah. This process of adopting, revising and

shome’a.”

⁷⁵ Juda Halevi, *Hakuzari* (Berlin, 1795), Satanow’s edition; Maimonides, *Milot HaHigayon* [Words of Logic] (Berlin, 1795), Satanow’s edition, with Mendelssohn’s commentary; *Moreh Nevuchim* [Guide for the Perplexed], III, (Berlin, 1796). Isaac Satanow’s edition; See B. Friedberg, *Toldot Hadefus Ha’ivri* [History of Hebrew Typography] (Antwerp, 1935), p. 96. See also, Pelli, *Bema’avkei Temurah*, pp. 27–28; Feiner, *Mahapechat Hane’orut*, pp. 274–282; *idem*, *The Jewish Enlightenment*, pp. 243–251.

⁷⁶ Nahman ben Simḥah, *Ein Mishpat* [Fountain of Justice] (Berlin, 1796).

⁷⁷ Isaac Euchel, “Davar El Hamedabrim” [A Word to the ‘Medabrim’], *Hame’asef*, III (1786), p. 209. See definition of ‘Medabrim’ in Isaac Satanow’s edition of Maimonides’ *Moreh Nevuchim*, III (1796), p. 77b.

⁷⁸ *Hame’asef*, VII (No. 1, 1794), p. 18.

re-forming existing conventions and forms in rabbinic Judaism, modernizing and updating them, continued for the duration of Haskalah in the nineteenth century. It had many forms and degrees of rejecting or modifying rabbinic Judaism. This process led eventually, generally speaking, to secularization in Judaism, as well as to alternatives to rabbinic Judaism, such as Reform Judaism.

Joel Brill's epigrammatic observation regarding the old and the new — tradition and modernity — reverberates now as it did some two hundred years ago:

Do not cast your eye upon the cup whether it is new or old
Set your eye at the wine itself
For there is new [cup] full of old
Yet also an old [cup], where there is no drink at all.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ J-L [Joel Brill], “Al Na Bakos” [Don’t Look at the Cup], *Hame’asef*, V (1789), p. 1.

CHAPTER TWO: THE RECEPTION OF EARLY GERMAN HASKALAH IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY HASKALAH

Haskalah, unquestionably, represents a ground-breaking phenomenon in the history of modern Judaism. Its attempts to introduce changes into Judaism while adhering to its essentials, as discussed in the previous chapter, typify the spiritual and cultural activities that directly followed it.¹

The impact of early Haskalah on the development of its later phases is a truism — a notion that is sometimes accepted in general terms, but has not as yet been discussed and analyzed thoroughly and is not fully understood. One of the most intriguing topics in this context is the ‘reception’ of early German Haskalah in the nineteenth century.

It is an accepted notion in the study of modern Hebrew literature and the Haskalah period that at the end of the nineteenth century, the Berlin Haskalah was severely criticized by various Maskilim, such as Peretz Smolenskin, and by post-Haskalah writers.

However, less known are the cultural and literary processes that took place as the centers of the Haskalah moved in the third decade of the nineteenth century to the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Galicia and later on to Russia, Lithuania, and Poland. To explore these phenomena we must trace the attitude toward the Berlin Haskalah in the other phases of the Haskalah and probe how the later Maskilim regarded the literature of the

¹ A preliminary version of this chapter was presented initially as a paper at the 38th Annual Conference of the Association for Jewish Studies in December 2006, in a session commemorating the late professor David Patterson whose writings on the latter part of the Hebrew Haskalah and his contribution to Jewish Studies were cited. An early version of that paper was published as an article in *Maven in Blue Jeans A Festschrift in Honor of Zev Garber*, Leonard Jacobs, ed. (West Lafayette, 2009), pp. 182–189.

early Haskalah. If indeed there was a change in attitude, a notion that is generally accepted, when did it take place, what is the essence of this change, and what brought it about?

This chapter addresses some of these questions, especially in the area of literary reception.

•

The theory of reception which gained grounds in the last quarter of the twentieth century was triggered mainly by the work of the German critic Hans Robert Jauss.²

Jauss argued that the history of a literary work must take into account “the active participation of its addressees,” namely the readers. Through the interaction with the audience, he asserted, “the work enters into the changing horizon-of-experience of a continuity in which the perpetual inversion occurs from simple reception to critical understanding.” Thus, there is a transition from “passive to active reception, from recognized aesthetic norms to a new production that surpasses them” (p. 19).³

He thus postulated that reconstructing literary history must underscore the role of the reader in the aesthetic reception of a literary work. “The literary experience of the reader” is founded on a system of expectations — referred to as “horizon of expectations.” These expectations are established through the reader’s familiarity with “norms of the immanent poetics of the genre,” acquaintance with other literary works at that time, and “through the opposition between fiction and reality, between the poetic and the practical function of language, which is always available to the reflective reader” (pp. 24, 25).

The “horizon of expectations” of a given work allows one to determine its artistic character by the kind and degree of its influence on a presupposed audience (p. 25).

When there is a “disparity between the given horizon of expectations and the appearance of a new work,” Jauss argued, its reception can result in a “change of horizons” “through negation of familiar experience or through raising newly articulated experiences.” This could be assessed by “the audience’s reaction and criticism’s judgment (spontaneous success, rejection or shock, scattered approval, gradual or belated understanding)” (p. 25).

² Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception, Theory and History of Literature*, II (Minneapolis, 1982), pp. 3–45. A review of theories related to Jauss may be found in D.W. Fokkema and Elrud Kunne-Ibsch, *Theories of Literature in the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1977), ch. 5, p. 149 (the whole chapter: pp. 136–164). A summary and analysis of Jauss’ theory is found in Ormond Rush, *The Reception of Doctrine* (Roma, 1997).

³ Cited page numbers in parentheses within the text of the chapter refer to the source discussed in that context and cited in a footnote nearby, and so throughout the book.

In as much as “the distance between the horizon of expectations and the work, between the familiarity of the previous aesthetic experience and the ‘horizontal change’ [...] decreases” [...] this “work can be characterized by an aesthetics of reception as not demanding any horizontal change, but rather as precisely fulfilling the expectations prescribed by a ruling standard of taste” (p. 25).

Following Jauss’ work, literary critics and historians explored the notion of “reader-response theory” and its various aspects, examining Jauss’ writing and applied his theories to feminine theories, or several authors’ reception in the history of literature.⁴

The aesthetics of reception assumes the availability of the texts in the time of their publication as well as in the subsequent periods. However, in the context of the literature of the Haskalah, a paramount question arises regarding the actual availability of early texts during its developing years in the nineteenth century.

Thus, the question of ‘reception’ in Haskalah literature must concurrently examine the issue of availability, without which the more theoretical issue of aesthetic reception may seem superfluous.

In addition, the question of the audience ought to be evaluated in relation to the unique nature of Haskalah literature and its particular situation as an innovating force in Jewish society, creating cultural and social on-going clashes between the traditionalists and the Maskilim. Obviously, in the current discussion the term ‘audience’ refers to the Maskilim, the intellectual elite that established the aesthetic taste.

Criteria for the Evaluation of Early Haskalah’s Reception

In checking the question of the availability of the early Haskalah books in the nineteenth century, one has to search for direct testimonies or data on the availability of these books, for citations from these books (which indicate their availability), or for references to their authors in the context of their works.

It is through such criteria that we may gain information about the ‘survival’ of these books and their re-emergence, as an indication of their reception and acceptance, at least on the superficial level of availability. Of

⁴ See, for example, Todd F. Davis and Kenneth Womack, *Transitions: Formalist Criticism and Reader-Response Theory* (New York, 2002); Charles Martindale and Richard F. Thomas, *Classics and the Uses of Reception* (Malden, MA., 2006).

course, further examination of these sources will disclose a more profound view of an aesthetic reception of this literature.

Obviously, this literature may be viewed as a whole when the overall concept of Haskalah literature and its general acceptance are concerned. However, to gain insights into individual literary work, each one and each type of literature should be discussed and evaluated separately concerning their availability, acceptance and aesthetic reception.

This very 'reception' implies a relationship with this literature which may signal a positive attitude of acceptance, or at least some degree of acceptance that implies readiness to engage in reading, discussing and evaluating these books. Thus, beyond the availability of this literature, readers' reception may denote what their horizon of expectations may be.

My assessment of the reception/availability of the early Haskalah is based on several general criteria of literary acceptance as guidelines for the current undertaking:

- A general criterion of reception is the reprinting and new editions of books, periodicals and articles from the early Haskalah period in the nineteenth century. These various editions were checked in 'classical' catalogues that were prepared in the nineteenth century and in later catalogues as well as in current holdings at major research libraries, some of which are on line. Likewise, contemporary lists of published books by nineteenth-century printers and publishers also serve to document these reprints. Auxiliary sources such as literary histories were used for their bibliographical information and insight.

- Similarly, reprints of biographies of early Maskilim, for example, are an indication not only of availability but indeed of acceptance and appreciation of early Haskalah personalities.

- On a more profound level, the acceptance of early Haskalah literature is established by identifying emulation of style and themes, and adoption of literary genres and forms from the early period in nineteenth-century writing.

- Dealing with a cultural and an ideological movement, gaining insights into the degree of acceptance is achieved by examining ideas and the ideology of the early Haskalah and their penetration into nineteenth-century Haskalah thought as they are recycled or addressed. Whether approved and embraced or possibly rejected, they are nevertheless discussed and considered, and both cases indicate a degree of acceptance.

- Memoirs of nineteenth-century Maskilim who reported about early Haskalah's impact on them and the acceptance of its authors and their writings are authentic sources for the study of both availability and reception.

- In-depth critiques as well as cursory evaluation of early Maskilim and their works by nineteenth-century authors as well as critics' assessment of the formers' contribution to the development of Haskalah serve as a reliable source of acceptance. Similarly, inclusion of early writers and their

works in nineteenth-century literary histories and surveys of Haskalah literature are indicative of their acceptance.

As a working hypothesis, it can be stated on the basis of first-hand impression from studying eighteenth- and nineteenth-century texts, that the reception of early German Haskalah in the second period of Haskalah, namely, in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, especially in Galicia and Italy, and in the beginning of the third period in Russia was generally rather positive. Discussion of such reception follows as per the above criteria.

Editions of Early Haskalah Books Republished in the Nineteenth Century: *Hame'asef*

The most convincing way to assess the availability and reception of the early Haskalah is based on exploring and examining reprints and new editions of early materials published in later periods of Haskalah. The general impression from first-hand study of this literature is that some early Haskalah books in various categories were published in many new editions in the nineteenth century.

Enterprising printers undertook to re-issue many of the early books of Haskalah due to limited distribution of early Haskalah books and pamphlets which were originally printed in Prussia and Vienna. Another factor was the unavailability of this material in other locations of Haskalah in the nineteenth century as a result of import restrictions of Hebrew books, high cost, or other limitations.⁵ The prohibition to re-publish Hebrew books by anyone but the author was generally stated in the approbation, and the ‘copyright’ was mostly for 10 years.⁶

These reprints and new editions provided seminal materials for Maskilim and neophytes who wished to learn about the foundations of Haskalah and its ideology, and to get acquainted with its quintessential writings. The reprints became the source of inspiration for aspiring writers and poets who used the early writings as guides for their own creative ambitions.

⁵ On restrictions and dissemination of books, see Saul Ginsburg, *Ketavim Historiyim* [Historical Writings] (Tel Aviv, 1944), p. 46.

⁶ Isaac Satanow's books contain approbations specifying ‘copyright’ for ten years. See, for example, *Imrei Binah* [Sayings of Reason] (Berlin, 1784). See discussion on the role of approbations in chapter one, and Moshe Pelli, *The Age of Haskalah* (Leiden, 1979; Revised edition: Lanham, 2006), p. 35, no. 3; *Bema'avkei Temurah* [Struggle for Change] (Tel Aviv, 1988), p. 93, n. 33.

The very reprinting of these books is indicative of the need for them, and consequently, also of a degree of acceptance.

Among the basic books that could be found on the proverbial ‘Jewish book shelf’ were many of the Haskalah books. Editions of Scriptures with translation into German, commentaries, and introductions by the Maskilim, as well as Hebrew textbooks, and works on Hebrew grammar and philology were displayed prominently. Of even greater importance was the republication of materials from *Hame’asef* (The Gatherer) as indicative of its reception.

A comprehensive study of this subject will require an extensive and detailed bibliographical probe, which is beyond the scope of this chapter. However, examples of major categories of important Haskalah material that was recycled in the nineteenth century will be presented here in order to show the prevailing trends in Haskalah’s reception. It should be emphasized, though, that these examples deal with factual information about Haskalah materials and their impact, disregarding at this point details of their qualitative evaluation. An attempt will be made to highlight some of their aesthetic reception.

This study may be expanded in the future to address other aspects of availability and reception by checking actual circulation and dissemination of these early books, and the presumed number of readers, authors, and published books.⁷ Although this kind of information is scarce, if available at all, it will be addressed below by citing some sources of information.

Reception of *Hame’asef*: One of the most impressive phenomena of early Haskalah reception is exemplified in the re-emergence of *Hame’asef*, the first Hebrew monthly of the German Haskalah, published intermittently from 1783 to 1811, as a powerful emblem of the Haskalah. It was the first continuous Hebrew periodical, serving as a means for ‘mass’ communication, disregarding the ephemeral publication of *Kohelet Musar* (Preacher of Morals) by Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786) in mid century (1750s). *Hame’asef* was so highly regarded that some nine years after its demise, the well-known publisher, Anton Schmid, and a group of Maskilim tried to fill the lacuna by issuing the second Hebrew journal, *Bikurei Ha’itim* (First Fruits of the Times), following in the footsteps of the first journal. *Bikurei Ha’itim* was published in Vienna from 1820 to 1831 as the organ of the Galician Haskalah, representing the second phase of Haskalah in the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Not only did the new journal consider itself as a follow-up of *Hame’asef*, but it also tried actively to show it. An impressive phenomenon that attested to the impact of the work of the early Maskilim may be found in the republication of articles, essays and poems from *Hame’asef* in

⁷ Dan Miron, *Bodedim Bemo’adam* [When Loners Come Together] (Tel Aviv, 1988), pp. 58–67, deals with this aspect of Hebrew literature in the 1880s.

Bikurei Ha'itim. The editors of the new journal republished some 207 different items (of the sum total of 1,916 entries in *Bikurei Ha'itim*) taken from the first four volumes of *Hame'asef*. They were included in special sections in *Bikurei Ha'itim* with headlines and captions similar to the originals.⁸ This is a clear indication of the continuous influence of the first journal and the special role it continued to play as the epitome of the Haskalah beyond its own time and place. The material was recycled without any editing or changes, and thus it became sort of a semi canonical body of writing in Hebrew Haskalah literature.

The question of the recycled material and the editor's policy regarding materials that were eliminated from republication are discussed in this author's book on *Bikurei Ha'itim*.⁹ One should not preclude the possibility that in addition to their esteem toward the first journal and its contents, the editors republished the material for lack of original contributions. Nevertheless, there are several references in the journal that the Maskilim requested to print material from the renowned *Hame'asef*. The publisher Anton Schmid announced that one of the reasons for publishing his new journal was the Maskilim's request to republish material from the beloved *Hame'asef*.¹⁰

This is the case where the availability of the early volumes of *Hame'asef* is not even questioned, for it is assumed that they were no longer readily available to the general public of Maskilim in Galicia, Italy and elsewhere. While the subscription to *Hame'asef* numbered a few hundreds, reaching some 360 at its height, according to one list,¹¹ such copies were probably located in private collections, and perhaps in some imperial libraries, but not available to the Maskilim in their various locations, as reported below.

⁸ Under the title "A Selection from the Most Beautiful Articles in *Hame'asef*."

⁹ Moshe Pelli, *Bikurei Ha'itim — Bikurei Hahaskalah* [Bikurei Ha'itim – The 'First Fruits' of Haskalah]: An Annotated Index to *Bikurei Ha'itim*, the Hebrew Journal of the Haskalah in Galicia (1820–1831)] (Jerusalem, 2005), pp. 45–46.

¹⁰ See *ibid.*, pp. 29, 35. Schmid wrote that he was approached by enlightened Jews who expressed their desire to have selections from the "beloved Me'asfim" reprinted in the new journal (An Announcement in three pages printed in an oversized paper and attached to the end of *Bikurei Ha'itim*, vol. I [1820/1], following p. 208)

¹¹ See Moshe Pelli, *Sha'ar Lahaskalah, Mafte'ah Mu'ar Lehame'asef Ktav Ha'et Ha'ivri Harishon* [The Gate to Haskalah, An Annotated Index to *Hame'asef*, the First Hebrew Journal] (Jerusalem, 2000), p. 56.

Even more impressive is the indication of the viability of *Hame'asef* beyond the first half of the nineteenth century. It was the republication in 1862 of a new edition of volume one of *Hame'asef* for the year 1783/4 by the Galician writer and editor Meir Halevi Letteris (1800–1871).¹² What triggered this undertaking was Letteris' realization that the volumes of *Hame'asef* became extinct and that there was rarely a full set of all its volumes to be found. Letteris reported that even with money and dedicated search one would not be able to obtain copies of *Hame'asef*. However, in his extensive travels throughout Germany, Letteris was able to assemble a complete set of all volumes of *Hame'asef*, having spent a lot of effort and money on it. Now, he unfolded his plan to republish the journal for the benefit of young Maskilim. As a student of the phenomenon of the journal, Letteris defined the historical role of *Hame'asef* as setting the guidelines for the Maskilim who seek *Hochmah* — wisdom and knowledge.¹³

An indication of the acceptance of some of the founders of German Haskalah is found in Letteris' writing which refers to the “glorious” names of Mendelssohn, Wessely, Euchel, Friedländer, Brill, and others, who contributed to *Hame'asef* (p. i).

A similar trend may be discerned in several attempts to revive the periodical (*Hame'asef*) and to issue some publication that resembled it. In 1829, Raphael Fürstenthal (1781–1855) issued a publication under the same title “*Hame'asef* for the Year 1829.” And in 1866, Juda Leib Reinhartz published a one-time volume that was also called *Hame'asef* which contained poems, riddles and letters, among other material.¹⁴

The continuous influence of *Hame'asef* on rank-and-file Maskilim may be seen also from a few attempts by some unknown Maskilim to compose such a periodical under the same title, *Hame'asef*, which have not been published.

In 1799, a group of young Maskilim in Kassel composed a journal which remained in manuscript form. Titled *Hame'asef Mikayitz TKNT* (*Hame'asef* from Summer 1799), it is an attempt to emulate the printed *Hame'asef* — which ceased publication in 1797 and renewed publication 1809 — in its structure, style and contents.¹⁵ The manuscript was discovered

¹² Meir Halevi Letteris, *Hame'asef Lishnat HTKMD* [*Hame'asef* for the Year HTKMD (1783/4)], second edition (Vienna, 1862).

¹³ *Ibid.*, “El Hakore” [To the Reader], pp. i–ii.

¹⁴ Raphael Fürstenthal, *Hame'asef Lishnat TKPT* [*Hame'asef* for the Year TKPT (1829)] (Breslau, 1829); Juda Leib Reinhartz, *Hame'asef* (Warsaw, 1866), including poetry, riddles, letters and articles, and selections from Mendelssohn's *Ma'amar Haberur Haphilosophi* [Essay of Philosophical Clarification] and selection from his *Kohelet Musar* [Preacher of Morals] (1750?).

¹⁵ *Hame'asef Mikayitz TKNT* [*Hame'asef* from Summer TKNT (1799)], found at the National and University Library in Strasbourg; see: Walter Röll, “The

at the National and University Library in Strasbourg by Walter Röll who concluded that the Haskalah influenced the cultural life in this relatively large, secondary Jewish community of Kassel (p. 50).

In 1815–1816 an unknown Maskil composed another such periodical titled *Keter Torah Hame'asef* in Holland, which this writer found recently at the Rosenthaliana library.¹⁶ While it did not follow the exact format and structure of the original *Hame'asef*, it nevertheless seems to be indebted to the Hebrew journal by the sheer desire to write in Hebrew and giving it the name of this revered periodical.

Neither of these manuscripts was published but they testify to the impact of *Hame'asef* on young and aspiring Maskilim.

In addition, in 1818, there was an attempt to publish selections from the original *Hame'asef* by the editor of the German Jewish periodical *Jedidja*, Jeremiah Heinemann, and the poet Moshe Büschenthal.¹⁷ The plan did not materialize but still it indicates an interest and a desire to republish original materials of early Haskalah.

To nineteenth-century Maskilim, *Hame'asef* represented a breakthrough and a turning point to the modern era in Hebrew letters. The new medium of the Hebrew press, its contents, language and aspiration caught the imagination of second-generation Haskalah, and it embraced the new concept and the new voice as part of its own agenda.

The republication of *Hame'asef*, in variety forms, had a precedent in the history of the Hebrew press in the repeated printing of excerpts from an earlier periodical publication. It was the ephemeral *Kohelet Musar* that was edited and probably written by Moses Mendelssohn some 30 years before *Hame'asef*. This periodical was not known at first to the editors of

Kassel ‘Ha-Meassef’ of 1799 [:] An Unknown Contribution to the Haskalah,” *The Jewish Response to German Culture*, Jehuda Reinharz, ed. (Hanover and London, 1985), pp. 32–50. See Pelli, *Haskalah Umodernism[:]* *Hathalot Vehemshechim* [Haskalah and Modernity: Beginnings and Continuity] (Israel, 2007), p. 195.

¹⁶ *Keter Torah Hame'asef*, a manuscript found at the Rosenthaliana Library in Amsterdam, written by Meier de Wulft (Coverden, 1815). See chapter on this manuscript in Pelli, *Haskalah Umodernism*, pp. 189–207.

¹⁷ *Ankündigung für Freunde der hebräischen Litteratur* (Berlin, 1818), a fifteen-page pamphlet bound at the end of the New *Hame'asef* [vol. VIII] (1809) edited by Shalom Hacohen, which I found at the State Library of Berlin. The announcement was published also as “Ankündigung für Freunde der hebräischen Litteratur,” *Jedidja*, II, 1 (1, 1818), pp. 117–122, without the excerpts in Hebrew.

Hame'asef, but later, in 1785, they reprinted parts of it. These excerpts were reprinted in *Bikurei Ha'itim* in 1823.¹⁸ Some of them were reproduced in 1866 in Reinhertz's *Hame'asef*.¹⁹

Editions of Early Haskalah Books Republished in the Nineteenth Century: Scriptures

Editions of the Hebrew Scriptures: Even more impressive was the republication of Haskalah editions of the Hebrew Scriptures, which were very popular in the nineteenth century, having been printed in several editions and were widely circulated.

Mendelssohn's *Be'ur* — the commentary on and translation of the Torah into German in Hebrew characters — which was the emblematic product of early Haskalah, had a long-lasting impact on Haskalah Judaism. It was republished in at least nine different editions by various printers during the century, according to one report.²⁰ Lowenstein, who studied the distribution of the *Be'ur*, cited six editions published in the last decade of the eighteenth century and some 17 other editions published in central Europe in the first half of the nineteenth century. The first volume of the initial edition of 1780–1783 had 515 subscribers who purchased 750 copies, which is indicative of its wide circulation.²¹

In the wake of the *Be'ur*, other Maskilim followed in Mendelssohn's footsteps and published commentaries and translations of other books of the Hebrew Bible. Such was Isaac Euchel's (1756–1804) translation of and the commentary on the book of Mishlei (Proverbs), which was first published in 1790, and then republished in five different editions in the subsequent

¹⁸ *Hame'asef*, II (1785), pp. 90–95, 103–105; *Bikurei Ha'itim*, III (1823/4), pp. 85–90, 96–98.

¹⁹ Juda Reinherz, *Hame'asef* (Warsaw, 1866), pp. 31–33 (excerpts from *Kohelet Musar*).

²⁰ Moses Mendelssohn, ed., *Netivot Hashalom* [Paths of Peace] (Berlin, 1783). The editions which I inspected personally will be indicated with full bibliographical data (throughout this chapter): *Sefer Netivot Hashalom* [Paths of Peace] (Vienna, 1817; 1818). See also Hayim Dov Friedberg, *Bet Eked Sefarim* [Library of Books], IV (Tel Aviv, 1956), p. 1074. One edition was published in Prague by Moshe Landau in the 1830s: *Sefer Netivot Hashalom* with translation and commentary by Rabbi Moshe of Dessau (Prague, 1833, 1835, 1836...). On the various editions, see Peretz Sandler, *Habe'ur Latorah* [Mendelssohn's Edition of the Pentateuch] (Jerusalem, 1940; 1984²), ch. 10, pp. 160–188.

²¹ Steven M. Lowenstein, "The Readership of Mendelssohn's Bible Translation," *Hebrew Union College Annual*, LIII (1982), pp. 180, 186 (the whole article: pp. 179–213).

thirty years.²² Euchel's introduction to *Mishlei* was reproduced in Moshe Landau's edition of *Sifrei Kodesh* (Holy Scriptures), book of *Mishlei*.²³ More discussion on Euchel and his reception in Haskalah is found in chapter three.

Among other similar biblical enterprises were the Five Scrolls by Aaron Wolfsohn (1754–1835) and Joel Brill (1762–1802), with Mendelssohn's translation into German of Song of Songs, Brill's edition of Psalms, and Juda Leib Ben Zeev's (1764–1811) introductions to the books of the Hebrew Bible. These books and others came out in many editions during the nineteenth century and afterwards.²⁴ Brill's translation of and commentary on the book of Jonah, first published in 1788, was republished in 1806.²⁵ Other Maskilim continued to translate the books of the prophets, such as Mayer Obernik's (1764–1805) translation of the book of Isaiah with part of Ben Zeev's introduction to the Scriptures in 1818,²⁶ Shmuel Detmold's (1765?–1829) translation and commentary on Ezekiel in the same year,²⁷ or the book of Job with Aaron Wolfsohn's translation in Herz Homberg's (1749–1841) revised edition (1826).²⁸ This is but a partial list of the reprints and new editions of the Scriptures by Maskilim. A more comprehensive bibliographical study should reveal a fuller picture of Haskalah's impact of its own version of Scriptures. However, this partial

²² Isaac Euchel, *Mishlei* [Proverbs] (Berlin, 1790); (Offenbach, 1805, 1826); (Dessau, 1804); (Vienna, 1817); (Fürth, 1817); and *Kitvei Hakodesh* [Holy Scriptures] (Vienna, 1817).

²³ *Sifrei Kodesh* [Holy Scriptures], Sefer *Mishlei*, Moshe Landau, publisher, translation and preface by Wolf Mayer, Introduction by Isaac Euchel (Prague, 1834).

²⁴ Joel Brill, *Sefer Zmirot Israel* [The Book of the Hymns of Israel] (Berlin, 1791); *Sefer Zmirot Israel Hu Sefer Tehilim* [The Book of the Hymns of Israel Which Is the Book of Psalms] (Vienna, 1817); Aaron Wolfsohn and Joel Brill, *Hamesh Megilot* [Five Scrolls] (Vienna, 1807; 1818). New editions were published under the general title *Kitvei Kodesh* [Holy Scriptures], such as the book of Job with German translation and commentary by Aaron Wolfsohn (Vienna, 1817; 1826), and Juda Leib Ben Zeev, *Mavo El Mikra'ei Kodesh* [Introduction to the Holy Scriptures] (Vienna, 1810).

²⁵ Joel Brill, translator and commentator, *Jonah* (Berlin, 1788); *Sefer Minḥah Tehorah Kolel Sefer Yonah* [Book of Pure Offering Including the Book of Jonah] (Prag, 1806).

²⁶ *Kitvei Kodesh* [Holy Scriptures], the book of Isaiah with Ben Zeev's "Mavo El Mikra'ei Kodesh" [Introduction to the Holy Scriptures] (Vienna, 1818).

²⁷ *Kitvei Kodesh*, Sefer Yehzekel [Ezekiel] (Vienna, 1818).

²⁸ *Kitvei Kodesh*, Sefer Iyov [Job] (Vienna, 1826).

overview is indicative of the degree of acceptance of Haskalah's *Be'ur*-like rendering of Scriptures.

The reception of these books is noticeable especially in numerous citations of them and their authors in many articles on biblical scholarship. One can find many such references to Mendelssohn's *Be'ur* and the other translations and commentaries in *Bikurei Ha'itim* and *Kerem Hemed* (Delightful Vineyard), among others, as the latter-day Maskilim assessed the works of their early counterparts, expressing their general appreciation of them, and at times debating some of their conclusions. For example, Yitzḥak Shmuel Reggio (1784–1855), in his articles on Psalms, acknowledged the great contributions by Mendelssohn and Euchel in their translation and commentary to the Psalms, saying that they excelled over their predecessors. Nevertheless, he argued against Brill's conclusion concerning the early composition of the book and brought proofs to its late dating and authorship.²⁹

It should be pointed out that traditional editions of Hebrew Scriptures with the classical commentaries were generally in wide circulation, being a permanent feature in Jewish homes. Yet, the spread of the Haskalah editions of the Hebrew Bible is definitely indicative of their reception by nineteenth-century Maskilim. They thereby demonstrated their adherence to the viewpoint of the early Haskalah concerning their attitude toward the Hebrew Bible. This also includes their aesthetic reception of the early Haskalah's concept of biblical poetry, its literary aesthetic, and its application to biblical themes in Maskilic epics and drama, as discussed below. The *Be'ur*, the *magnum opus* of the early Haskalah, attracted young Maskilim who wished to gain insights into the mind of Mendelssohn, his aesthetics and rhetoric.

However, at the end of the century there is a report by Berdichevsky that most people buy traditional texts rather than the Maskilim's editions.³⁰

Reprints of Major Works on Hebrew Language, Grammar and Philology

Hebrew language and grammar: The early Maskilim have devoted their creative energies to the study of Hebrew grammar, philology, and etymology in their desire to revive the Hebrew language. The outcome of their efforts became a major source for evaluating the reception of early Haskalah's linguistic endeavor. Very much like the *Be'ur* enterprise, it

²⁹ Y. S. Reggio, [Articles on Psalms], *Kerem Hemed*, IV (1839), pp. 15–53, 75–80; V (1841), pp. 251–255. References may be found in my book *Kerem Hemed — 'Hochnat Israel' Hee Yavneh Hahadashah* [*Kerem Hemed — 'Hochmat Israel'* As the 'New Yavneh'] (Jerusalem, 2009).

³⁰ Michah Yoseph Berdichevsky, *Kitvei Michah Yoseph Bin-Gorion* [The Writings of M.Y.B.], II, Essays (Tel Aviv, 1960), p. 245.

marks one of the primary activities of nineteenth-century Haskalah in its effort to continue the probe into the Hebrew language and reevaluate and refine their predecessors' works.

Naphtali Herz Wessely (1725–1805) was one of the early Haskalah writers whose works on grammar have been highly regarded during his lifetime and afterwards. His book, *Gan Na'ul* (A Garden Locked), known also as *Levanon* (Lebanon), deals with synonyms and terms of 'wisdom' in the Bible. Originally published in Amsterdam in 1765, it became quite popular at this age of 'reason' and was republished in six more editions.³¹

In many ways, Wessely's book is indicative of an important trend in the development of Haskalah whose pundits worked diligently on the definitions of biblical terminology. They clarified the vocabulary of the Bible, and probed its application to the modern, developing Hebrew language.

An indication of the continuous reliance on existing works done by grammarians of early Haskalah may be found in the republication of their works. One such example is Hayim Cöslin's (? –1832) book of Hebrew grammar, *Maslul Bedikduk Leshon Hakodesh* (A Path in the Grammar of the Holy Language) which was initially published in 1788 and achieved 20 editions in the following one-hundred years.³² Joel Brill's Hebrew grammar, *Amudei Halashon* (The Pillars of Language), was first published in Berlin in 1794, and then republished in two more editions, and his *Luhot Binyenei Hape'alim* (Tables of Verb Constructions) was republished several times.³³

Even more impressive is the reception and acceptance of Juda Leib Ben Zeev's diversified works. Ben Zeev, one of the Haskalah most prolific grammarians, philologists, and biblical scholars, produced several Hebrew

³¹ *Levanon*, or *Gan Na'ul* [Lebanon, or A Garden Locked], I (Amsterdam, 1765), II (Amsterdam, 1766); Schmid published a new edition of *Levanon*, or *Gan Na'ul*, I, II (Vienna, 1829); another edition: Vilna, 1871. Friedberg, *Bet Eked Sefarim*, I, p. 199.

³² Hayim Cöslin, *Maslul Bedikduk Leshon Hakodesh* [A Path in the Grammar of the Holy Language] (Hamburg, 1788). Republished in Vilna, 1852; Lemberg, 1860. See G. Kressel, *Cyclopedia of Modern Hebrew Literature*, II (Merḥavyah, Israel, 1965), p. 785. Friedberg, *Bet Eked Sefarim*, II (Tel Aviv, 1952), p. 633, reports of 19 editions including the first one.

³³ Joel Brill, *Amudei Halashon* [The Pillars of Language] (Berlin, 1794); (Prague, 1803); a short version published by *Hevrat To'let* (Beneficent Society): (Amsterdam, 1820); *idem*, *Luhot Binyenei Hape'alim* [Tables of Verb Constructions] (Berlin, 1794) was also published in Prag, 1803. Friedberg, *Bet Eked Sefarim*, III (Tel Aviv, 1954), p. 801.

philology books, lexicons, and textbooks. These were widely circulated in many editions throughout the nineteenth century.

The literary historian Joseph Klausner reported of twelve different editions of Ben Zeev's *Talmud Lashon Ivri* (Learning the Hebrew Language), a comprehensive treatise on Hebrew grammar, published from 1796 to 1874, while the bibliographer Hayim Dov Friedberg noted fifteen editions.³⁴ Similarly, Ben Zeev's lexicon *Otzar Hashorashim* (Treasure of Roots) was published in five editions. Summarizing its influence, Klausner wrote that this book "showed ten of thousands of young people the linguistic treasures of the Bible [...] and thus taught them the Hebrew language."³⁵

Ben Zeev's catechism *Bet Hasefer* (The School) was printed in nine editions.³⁶ His books were republished throughout the nineteenth century up until the 1880s. Their reception varied; some of the books were used as textbooks for school and they impacted generations of youths. The lexicons were used on another level of reception by more mature Maskilim as references in their study to master the Hebrew language or in their writing. The foundation of the study of the Hebrew language set in the early years of Haskalah continued to impact the later Maskilim in their commitment to revive the language. The republication of editions of these books is indicative of their need by subsequent generations of Maskilim, thus relying on the infra-structure created by the early Maskilim.

For example, Shalom Hacohen (1771–1845), known for his poetry and editorship of *Hame'asef* and *Bikurei Ha'itim*, also engaged in publishing a comprehensive textbook on Hebrew grammar. His *Torat Lashon Ivrit* (Learning the Hebrew Language), first published in 1802, cited some of the earlier Haskalah grammarians such as Moses Mendelssohn, Joel Brill and Ben Zeev, among others. It was republished in 11 more editions in the

³⁴ Juda Leib Ben Zeev, *Talmud Lashon Ivri* [Learning the Hebrew Language] (Vienna, 1827⁵); *Sefer Talmud Lashon Ivri* (Vilna and Hrodna [Grodno], 1830); (Vilna, 1839); (Vilna, 1874), Abraham Baer (Adam Hacohen) Lebensohn's edition. Lebensohn reported that Ben Zeev's book was designated by the civil authorities to be the textbook for teaching Hebrew (his introduction, p. x). Joseph Klausner, *Historiah Shel Hasifrut Ha'ivrit Hahadashah* [History of Modern Hebrew Literature], I (Jerusalem, 1960), pp. 182–183. See also Friedberg, *Bet Eked Sefarim*, IV (Tel Aviv, 1956), p. 1105.

³⁵ Juda Leib Ben Zeev, *Otzar Hashorashim* [Treasure of Roots], [I] (Vienna, 1807); II (Vienna, 1808); III (Vienna, 1807), (Vienna, 1844), German listings translated into Hebrew. Klausner, *Historiah Shel Hasifrut Ha'ivrit Hahadashah*, I, pp. 183–184; Friedberg, *Bet Eked Sefarim*, I (Tel Aviv, 1951), p. 43.

³⁶ Ben Zeev, *Bet Hasefer* [The School] (Vienna, 1811⁴); II (Vienna, 1811⁴); (Vienna, 1849⁹). Klausner, *Historiah Shel Hasifrut Ha'ivrit Hahadashah*, I, p. 184, reports of nine editions; Friedberg, *Bet Eked Sefarim*, I, p. 145, reports of seven editions.

nineteenth century. Shalom Hacohen's role in Haskalah is important because he served as an intermediary between the early Maskilim and the second generation of Maskilim in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Thus, he acknowledged the contribution of the early grammarians while his own grammatical work continued to flourish throughout the nineteenth century.³⁷

Like Hacohen, some of the nineteenth-century Maskilim expressed their indebtedness to the early Haskalah writers in Hebrew linguistics. The Italian Maskil Reggio, for example, whose literary activities covered the third to fifth decades of the nineteenth century, cited Ben Zeev and his *Talmud Lashon Ivri* in his articles in *Kerem Hemed*, and showed his acquaintance with Ben Zeev's linguistic work.³⁸

Republication of Literary Materials in Chrestomathies, Primers and Catechisms

Republished practical Hebrew language textbooks, primers, chrestomathies, and catechisms of early Haskalah vintage, as discussed in the context of Ben Zeev, is a prevalent phenomenon in the nineteenth century. Understandably, they were much needed educational tools in Jewish schools that began to emerge in centers of Haskalah in the nineteenth century, and also assisted private tutors and young, aspiring Maskilim. Thus, the republication of new editions of these basic Hebrew language books is an indication of their acceptance and receptions. Needless to say, they were exposed to thousands of students and young Maskilim.

These primers, catechisms and language textbooks were also of great importance in recycling literary material. They included recycled literary texts such as fables, parables, epigrams, moral tales and stories, written by the Me'asfim — the circle of writers contributing to *Hame'asef* — and published initially in *Hame'asef*, for the use by students and young Maskilim.³⁹ Likewise, several catechism books for the teaching of the basic

³⁷ Shalom Hacohen, *Torat Lashon Ivrit* [Learning the Hebrew Language] (Berlin, 1802); (Dessau, 1807); (Vienna, 1816); (Vienna, 1825). Friedberg, *Bet Eked Sefarim*, IV, p. 1093. He cites Mendelsohn's introduction to the *Be'ur, Or Linetivah* [Light for Path] (Berlin, 1783), Brill's *Amudei Halashon*, and Ben Zeev's *Talmud Lashon Ivri* as references in the introduction to the 1807 edition, part II.

³⁸ *Kerem Hemed*, I (1833), pp. 79–80; *ibid.*, II (1836), p. 87.

³⁹ Ben Zeev lists references to previously printed fables and poems at the end of his book *Bet Hasefer*, II (1811⁴), pp. [307–308]. In addition, some of the poems (pp. 163, 173) and fables (p. 192) were previously published in *Hame'asef*.

religious tenets of Judaism were published by the early Maskilim. One such textbook was Aaron Wolfsohn's *Avtalyon* which was published in Berlin in 1790 and was republished in three more editions.⁴⁰ It incorporated biblical stories, teaching of morals, stories and fables, some of which were reprinted from *Hame'asef*. Ben Zeev's *Yesodei Hadat* (The Foundations of Religion) was published in 1811, and then republished in 1823.⁴¹ A similar book, *Shorshei Emunah* (Elements of Faith), was published by Shalom Hacohen in a bi-lingual edition, Hebrew and English, in London in 1815; it was re-issued in English only in 1817, and translated into Dutch and published in Amsterdam in 1816.⁴²

Another source of recycled material from early Haskalah is found in collections of didactic letters, the *Briefstellers*, such as Shalom Hacohen's *Ktav Yosher* (An Epistle of Righteousness) published in 1820.⁴³ In it Hacohen included selections from early Haskalah authors, some of whom will be mentioned below. Among them there are segments from the prospectus to *Hame'asef*, *Nahal Habesor* (The Brook 'Besor,' or Good Tidings) (1783) by Euchel with Wessely's response, additional selections from the writings of Euchel, Wessely, Shlomo Pappenheim and Shlomo Loewisohn. *Ktav Yosher* was intended as a learning tool for students and young Maskilim to teach them how "to correspond" or "to imprint their thoughts on book in a simple, clear and pleasant expression." It became an exemplary guide for correct and creative writing. The book was republished in some 20 editions in that century and the early Haskalah material was disseminated through it.

Meyer Hesse, in his *Netiv Halashon* [Language Path] (Altona, 1829), has idylls and fables printed originally in *Hame'asef*. More on children's literature and textbooks, see Uriel Ofek, *Sifrut Hayeladim Ha'ivrit – Hahathalah* [Hebrew Children's Literature – the Beginning] (Tel Aviv, 1979), and Zohar Shavit, "From Friedländer's Lesebuch to the Jewish Campe [:] The Beginning of Hebrew Children's Literature in Germany," *The Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, XXXIII (1988), pp. 385–415; and her article "Harihit Shel Ḥadar Hahaskalah Hayehudit Beberlin" [The Furniture of Jewish Haskalah's 'Heder' in Berlin], *Keminhang Ashkenaz Upolin, Sefer Yovel Lechone Shmeruk* [In the Custom of Ashkenaz and Poland, C. S. Festschrift] (Jerusalem, 1993), pp. 193–207. See also her bibliography of writings for children and youth, Zohar Shavit, Hans-Heino Ewers, et al., *Deutsch-jüdische Kinder- und Jugendliteratur von der Haskala bis 1945* (Stuttgart, 1996).

⁴⁰ Aaron Wolfsohn, *Avtalyon* (Berlin, 1790); (Vienna, 1800); (Prague, 1806); (Vienna, 1814).

⁴¹ Ben Zeev, *Yesodei Hadat* [The Foundations of Religion] (Vienna, 1811); (Vienna, 1823).

⁴² Shalom Hacohen, *Shorshei Emunah* [Elements of Faith] (London, 1815), in a bi-lingual edition; an English edition: *Elements of the Jewish Faith* ([London], 1817); in Dutch translation: (Amsterdam, 1816).

⁴³ Shalom Hacohen, *Ktav Yosher* [An Epistle of Righteousness] (Vienna, 1820).

The book's importance far exceeds its role as a learning tool for writing exemplary Hebrew. It became a documentation source for early Haskalah. *Ktav Yosher* includes some of Haskalah's most important documents: Euchel's introduction to Mishlei, selections from Mendelssohn's biography, and his letter to Wessely reprinted from *Nahal Habesor*. It includes samples of Wessely's poetry as well as excerpts from Shlomo Pappenheim and Shlomo Loewisohn's writings.⁴⁴ These selections may serve as an indicator for the reception of early Haskalah writers in the 1820s. They were probably used as substitute for the full texts and an incentive for subsequent Maskilim to search for the original books or their republished editions.

Another such collection of letters, Jacob Lapin's *Keset Hasofer* (Scribe's Inkwell) (1857), served to publish contemporary authors' letters as well as some 'classical' letters from the early Haskalah such as Wessely's accompanied by a poem published in *Hame'asef* in 1789 (p. 109). The author also highlighted the memory of early Haskalah writers by citing inscriptions on their tombstones, such as Mendelssohn (p. 133), Brill (p. 104) and others (pp. 130–148).⁴⁵

Reprints of Ideological Books

An important source of information about the reception of early Haskalah and the acceptance of its ideology in the nineteenth century is found in the republication of its ideological books. Issuing new editions of such books is indicative of the need to examine and to explore the ideas and ideals of early Haskalah and perhaps to adopt them as well.

One of these books was Naphtali Herz Wessely's educational treatise *Divrei Shalom Ve'emet* (Words of Peace and Truth). In it, Wessely delineated in 1782 the ideological platform advocating the introduction of reforms in Jewish education — especially adding secular subjects to the curriculum — as discussed in chapter one. It is one of the basic ideological books of early Haskalah and the most seminal one.

Wessely's writings had a great impact on the Maskilim of his time and afterwards. The demands for educational reform continued to be expressed by nineteenth-century Maskilim, and the republication of Wessely's book consecutively in 1826, 1827, and 1886 indicates that it was in demand,

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 97, 89, 101, 107, 121, 124.

⁴⁵ Jacob Lapin, *Keset Hasofer* [Scribe's Inkwell] (Berlin, 1857).

attesting to its acceptance throughout the nineteenth century even after the demise of the Berlin Haskalah.⁴⁶

Early Haskalah ideas have been circulating in later writings, signaling the influence of the founding fathers of Haskalah. Thus, echoes of Wessely's proposed educational reforms are resonating in the writings of later Maskilim, such as in *Te'udah Beyisrael* (Testimony in Israel) by the Russian Maskil Isaac Baer Levinsohn (1788–1860), and others.⁴⁷

Not only did ideological books of Haskalah go through republication but also seminal books on Haskalah's perception of Judaism. The major treatise on Judaism was Mendelssohn's *Jerusalem* that was first published in German in 1783. To make it more accessible to Maskilim whose knowledge of German was not on par with Mendelssohn's philosophical and theological treatise, Euchel included excerpts from the book, translated into Hebrew, in his biography of Mendelssohn. It was serialized first in *Hame'asef* in 1788 and then published in book form a year later.⁴⁸

Only 79 years later, in 1867, was Mendelssohn's *Jerusalem* translated and published by Abraham Gottlober (1811–1899) with a glorified introduction about the book and its author. It ends with the following poem: "Moshe son of Amram received the Torah from heavens; Moshe son of Maimon gave it a living soul; Moshe son of Menahem built for it a temple in *Jerusalem*."⁴⁹ Of course, many of the Maskilim could read Mendelssohn's treatise in the original. For example, Reggio cited from Mendelssohn's *Jerusalem* in an article in *Kerem Hemed*. He also defended

⁴⁶ See Naphtai Herz Wessely, *Divrei Shalom Ve'emet* [Words of Peace and Truth] (Berlin, 1782–5); (Vienna, 1826); *Michtavim Shonim* [Various Writings], including *Divrei Shalom Ve'emet* (Vienna, 1827); *Sefer Divrei Shalom Ve'emet*, Kalman Schulmann's edition (Warsaw, 1886); see Friedberg, *Bet Eked Sefarim*, I, p. 225.

⁴⁷ Isaac Baer Levinsohn, *Te'udah Beyisrael* (Testimony in Israel) (Vilna, 1828; facsimile edition: Jerusalem, 1977). See Imanuel Etkes's Introduction "Te'udah Beyisrael – Bein Temurah Lemasoret" [Testimony in Israel – Between Change and Tradition], pp. 6, 17.

⁴⁸ Itzik Euchel, *Toldot Rabenu Hehacham Moshe Ben Menahem* [The Life Story of Our Rabbi the Sage M.B.M.] (Berlin, 1789); serialized in *Hame'asef*, IV (1788), pp. 113–144, 177–208, 337–368; V (1789), pp. 33–64.

⁴⁹ *Sefer Yerushalayim* [Jerusalem], Abraham Baer Gottlober, trans. (Zhitomir, 1867), p. xxx. It was translated later by "Shoher Tov Leyisrael" [Seeker of Goodness for Israel = Vladimir Fiodorov (Zvi Greenbaum)], and published in Vienna in 1876 by Peretz Smolenskin (*Bet Eked Sefarim*, II, p. 444, no. 941; Klausner, *Historiah Shel Hasifrut Ha'ivrit Hahadashah*, I, p. 85, n. 2; also listed in the catalogue of the Jewish National and University Library), and in the twentieth century: Moshe Mendelssohn, *Yerushalayim* (Tel Aviv, 1947).

Mendelssohn against David Friedländer's interpretation of him as leaning toward reform.⁵⁰

Reprints of Commentaries on Classical Texts, Ethics, Books on Science

Commentaries on classical texts: In addition to early Maskilim publishing commentaries on biblical books, they also published several classical texts with their commentaries. Some of them were non-canonical books, on post-biblical traditional texts, and on medieval Jewish philosophy. These were undertakings that epitomized the Maskilim's quest to restore 'hidden,' post-canonical texts to the core of Hebrew creative heritage and to explore traditional texts from a maskilic — yet not anti-traditionalist — point of view.

Some undertook to explore the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha literature. Wessely translated the *Wisdom of Solomon* into Hebrew under the title *Hochmat Shlomo* and added his own commentary, "Ru'ah Hen" (Graceful Spirit), and published it in 1780. Following the first edition, it was published in eight editions afterwards.⁵¹ The same spirit of discovery of post biblical Hebrew creativity that drove Wessely prompted Juda Leib Ben Zeev in 1807 to publish the Apocrypha book of *Ben Sira* with his translation and commentary. "This book is one of the precious treasures,"

⁵⁰ *Kerem Hemed*, I (1833), p. 8; Reggio reviewed Naphtali Bennet's book and rejected its author's belief in eternal punishment in the afterlife contrary to Maimonides and Mendelssohn. *Ibid.*, p. 89, his defense of Mendelssohn is based on Euchel's biography of him and his portrayal of Mendelssohn as adhering to traditional Judaisms. See below.

⁵¹ *Sefer Hochmat Shlomo* [The Wisdom of Solomon] with commentary "Ru'ah Hen" [Graceful Spirit], Naphtali Herz Wessely, translator and commentator ([Berlin], 1780); Rosenthaliana Bibliothec has a manuscript of the book dated 1756 in Copenhagen, which is different than the printed version, No. Ros. 543. Friedberg, *Bet Eked Sefarim*, II, p. 373; four of the editions had a short version of Wessely's commentary "Ru'ah Hen." The Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem lists 7 editions including the original. A facsimile edition of the original was published in 1991 in New York by Ogorek.

he wrote, “left by our forefathers as a token of the glory of Israel.”⁵² Ben Zeev’s book was published in eight editions including the first one.⁵³

The subsequent editions of these Apocrypha books are indicative of the continued trend in the nineteenth century of Maskilim’s desire to re-arrange the ‘Jewish book shelf’ following in the footsteps of the founding fathers of Haskalah.

As the need for these books arose in various Haskalah centers, printers undertook to publish new editions which became available during the nineteenth century.

The interest in revising and updating the ‘Jewish Book Shelf’ was exhibited in another way: continuing the centuries-old tradition of writing commentaries on the classical corpus of Judaic books.

Wessely, for one, undertook to write a commentary on the Mishnah of *Pirkei Avot* (The Ethics of the Fathers), which was published as *Yen Levanon* (The Wine of Lebanon) in 1775. This book was published in two new editions in the nineteenth century, and obviously, such staple book on the Jewish book shelf, with its Haskalah, yet traditional, stamp, was very much in demand, and indeed there were many other traditional editions.⁵⁴

Similarly, some of the Maskilim’s editions of Maimonides’ *Moreh Nevuchim* (Guide for the Perplexed) with Solomon Maimon’s commentary (1791) and *Be’ur Milot Hahigayon* (Commentary on Words of Logic) with Moses Mendelssohn’s commentary and Isaac Satanow’s (1732–1804) comments (1795) were republished several times during the century. The continued interest in Maimonides attests to his pivotal role in late Haskalah as in early Haskalah. The republished commentaries of the early Maskilim indicate the degree of their acceptance in the nineteenth century. On the other hand, Satanow’s edition of Juda Halevi’s *Hakuzari* has not been reprinted in the nineteenth century.⁵⁵

⁵² *Hochmat Yehoshua Ben Sira* [The Wisdom of Joshua Ben Sira], translation and commentary by Juda Leib Ben Zeev (Vienna, 1807), in an unpaginated introduction.

⁵³ Friedberg, *Bet Eked Sefarim*, I, pp. 155–156, lists 20 editions, including translations to other languages and twentieth-century editions. The Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem lists 8 editions including the original.

⁵⁴ Naphtali Herz Wessely, *Yen Levanon* [The Wine of Lebanon] (Amsterdam, 1775); (Warsaw, 1884); (Warsaw, 1898). A facsimile edition of the original was published in 1991 in New York by Ogorek.

⁵⁵ Moshe ben Maimon (Maimonides), *Moreh Nevuchim* [Guide for the Perplexed], II (Berlin, 1791–96), Isaac Satanow’s edition and his commentary; volume one was published in 1791 with Solomon Maimon’s commentary “Give’at Hamoreh” [Guide’s Hill]. The Jewish National and University Library lists three more editions: in 1800 and 1828, twice. *Idem*, *Be’ur Milot Hahigayon* [Commentary on Words of Logic] (Berlin, 1784) with Moses Mendelssohn’s commentary and Isaac Satanow’s comments had six more

Reprints of books on ethics: Early Haskalah writers engaged in writing books on ethics, which also discussed attributes of the soul, inner qualities of the individual, and proper conduct, as their contribution to 'Books on Ethics' genre. Wessely's *Sefer Hamidot* (Book of Ethics), initially published in 1785, was republished in five new editions in the nineteenth century.⁵⁶ Isaac Satanow's book by the same title, *Sefer Hamidot*, published in Berlin in 1784, was republished in one new edition in 1885.⁵⁷

As in the other categories of reprints, the new editions of ethics books by early Haskalah authors mark their acceptance in the nineteenth century. Moreover, in a more profound way, they indicate the late Haskalah following the guidelines of morality and ethics of their predecessors, and their application to improving the character of the individual Jew and the state of Jewish society.

Secular studies: One of the stated goals of the Haskalah was to foster secular studies among the Jews particularly in the areas of general and natural sciences. Among the first Maskilim in Germany who wrote on natural sciences was Baruch Linda (1759?–1849). He published a series of articles on science in *Hame'asef*,⁵⁸ which were expanded and published in 1788 in his book *Reisheet Limudim* (Beginning of Learning). Subsequently, six more editions were expanded and published, as an indication of the book's popularity and reception and the need for basic books on science.⁵⁹

editions in the nineteenth century and two translations into German, according to the catalogue of The Jewish National and University Library. Juda Halevi, *Sefer Hakuzari* [The Book of Kuzari] (Berlin, 1795), Satanow's edition and his commentary. On nineteenth-century editions of both *Moreh Nevuchim* and other editions of *Hakuzari*, see Friedberg, *Bet Eked Sefarim*, II, p. 573, 458–459.

⁵⁶ Naphtali Herz Wessely, *Sefer Hamidot* (Book of Ethics) (Berlin, 1785); (Vienna, 1818). The Jewish National and University Library lists five new editions.

⁵⁷ Isaac Satanow, *Sefer Hamidot* [Book of Ethics] was published in 1784, and republished (Warsaw, 1885).

⁵⁸ Pelli, *Sha'ar Lahaskalah, Mafte'ah Mu'ar Lehame'asef*, p. 113, a list of Baruch Linda's articles in *Hame'asef* in physics and biology.

⁵⁹ Baruch Linda, *Reisheet Limudim* [Beginning of Learning] (Berlin, 1788); *Reisheet Limudim*, II (Dessau, 1810). Friedberg, *Bet Eked Sefarim*, III, p. 931; see also Klausner, *Historiaj Shel Hasifrut Ha'ivrit Haḥadashah*, I, pp. 191–192: four editions of volume I, two editions of volume II; Ofek, *Sifrut*

A further acknowledgment of Linda's acceptance as late as 1873 is found in Shalom Yaakov Abramovich's (1836?–1917) own book on natural science, *Toldot Hateva* (The Story of Nature) (1862–1873), where he paid tribute to Linda's work, citing extensively from the approbations to Linda's book by Doctors Mordechai Bloch and Mordechai (Marcus) Herz, who were scientists themselves.⁶⁰ Bloch noted the need for such scientific books in Hebrew and acknowledged Linda's great contribution for the benefit of Jewish students. Herz underscored the importance of texts on basic science for the acquisition of *Hochmah*.

Following the Maskilim's advocacy for acquisition of secular knowledge, Ben Zeev's catechism, *Bet Hasefer*, which was discussed previously, had a section on Greek philosophers, their biographies, select sayings, and exemplary stories about them. It was published as a separate book titled *Hachmei Yavan* (Greek Philosophers) in 1904.⁶¹

Biographies of Early Maskilim

As Haskalah developed in the nineteenth century, the image of its founding fathers emerged as unifying figures who should be followed and emulated. Some of these figures were allotted early biographies in the first period of Haskalah, which may be even referred to as hagiographies.

These biographies aimed to glorify the exemplary figures of early Haskalah such as Moses Mendelssohn and Naphtali Herz Wessely. The first Hebrew biography was devoted to Mendelssohn, and was written by the editor and Haskalah activist Isaac Euchel. Titled *Toldot Rabenu Moshe Ben Menahem* (The Life Story of Rabbi M.B.M.), it was first serialized in *Hame'asef* and then published as a book in 1789. Mendelssohn's biography was republished in three more editions in the next century as a testimony of the acceptance of the person as well as of his teaching, namely, Haskalah.⁶²

⁶⁰ *Hayeladim Ha'ivrit – Hahatḥalah*, p. 18. The Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem lists 5 editions including the two originals listed above.

⁶¹ Shalom Yaakov Abramovich praised Baruch Linda and his book *Reisheet Limudim*, in the introduction, "Et Ledaber" [Time to Talk], to his book *Toldot Hateva* [The Story of Nature], III (Vilna, 1873), pp. xxvii–xxiii.

⁶² Ben Zeev, "Hachmei Yavan" [Greek Philosophers], *Bet Hasefer* (Vienna, 1811), pp. 220–250; *Sefer Hachmei Yavan* (Munkács, 1905); see Friedberg, *Bet Eked Sefarim*, II, p. 371, where he cites Ben Zeev's name as author on the book with a slightly different title; my copy does not mention Ben Zeev's name.

⁶³ Itzik Euchel, *Toldot Rabenu Heḥacham Moshe Ben Menahem* [The Life Story of Our Rabbi the Sage M.B.M.] (Berlin, 1789); serialized in *Hame'asef*, IV (1788), pp. 113–144, 177–208, 337–368; V (1789), pp. 33–64. Among the other editions: *Toldot Harav Hakolol Heḥacham Haḥoker Elohi Rabenu Moshe Ben Menahem* [Life Story of the Perfect Rabbi, the Sage, Scholar in Divine Matters, Our Rabbi M. B. M.] (Vienna, 1814; *Toldot Heḥacham Haḥoker Elohi Rabenu Moshe Ben Menahem* [The Life Story of the Sage, Scholar in Divine

The title of the book includes the honorific title “Rabenu,” customarily referring to rabbis, indicative of the Maskilim’s veneration of Mendelssohn. Euchel’s dictum on Mendelssohn, “Precious in his generation, unique in his people,” appearing on the title page, continued to resonate throughout the nineteenth century.⁶³

Not only did reprinting of biographies mark their acceptance but also new biographies written on the luminaries of early Haskalah continued this trend. One such biography on Mendelssohn was published in 1820 in *Bikurei Ha’itim*, thus accentuating the persona of Mendelssohn 34 years after his death and conveying the esteem that the editors of the journal had for him.⁶⁴

The high esteem of Mendelssohn in the nineteenth century was expressed directly and openly in numerous instances. On the occasion of the 100 anniversary of Mendelssohn’s birth, Juda Jeiteles (1773–1838), an editor of *Bikurei Ha’itim*, proposed to inscribe that date on the Jewish calendar to be observed for this and future generations.⁶⁵

The other major figure in German Haskalah, Wessely, was the subject of several biographies which were published in the nineteenth century. It started with a biography by the Amsterdam Maskil David Friedrichsfeld (1755?–1810) in 1809, which had the evocative title “Commemoration of a Righteous Man” (*Zecher Tzadik*).⁶⁶ The biographer summarized Wessely’s personality as perceived by the early Maskilim as “the perfect sage, the splendid rhetorician, the sublime poet, a wholesome righteous person” (p. 1). A brief biography on Wessely, based on Friedrichsfeld’s, was attached to the 1841 edition of *Shirei Tiferet* (Songs of Glory).⁶⁷ The trend continued in 1857 in a serialized biography in *Hamagid* (The Herald), and in 1886 two

Matters, Our Rabbi M.B.M.], published in *Zmirot Israel* [The Hymns of Israel] (Lemberg, 1860), by Michael Wolf publisher, (see note 72 below).

⁶³ For example in Levinsohn’s *Te’udah Rejisrael*, p. 151

⁶⁴ “Toldot Rabenu Moshe Ben Menahem,” *Bikurei Ha’itim*, I (1820/1), pp. 20–26, written in German in Hebrew characters.

⁶⁵ *Bikurei Ha’itim*, XI (1830/1) pp. 23–26.

⁶⁶ David Friedrichsfeld, *Zecher Tzadik* [Commemoration of a Righteous Man] (Amsterdam, 1809).

⁶⁷ “Toldot Hechacham Hamelitz [...] N. H. Weisel” [The Life Story of the Sage, the Poet N. H. W.], *Shirei Tiferet* [Songs of Glory] (Warsaw, 1840–41), pp. 122–128; the same brief biography under the same title, based on the same source, appeared in the Lemberg, 1844 edition, pp. 100–120, and in the Przemysl, 1871, edition, part 5, vol. 2, pp. 115–135. See note 91 below.

more biographies on Wessely were published by Kalman Schulman (1819–1899) and Shlomo Mandelkern (1846–1902).⁶⁸

These four different biographies of Wessely testify to the high esteem he has been accorded in later Haskalah and beyond. Accordingly, his acceptance as representing the early Haskalah at its best is fostered in these biographies. He is portrayed as being an education reformer (*Divrei Shalom Ve'emet*), a champion of the Hebrew language (his grammatical work), a biblical scholar (his contribution to the *Be'ur* project), and a poet (*Shirei Tiferet*), among his other attributes. Concurrently, his work in various areas are being recognized and accepted, as cited throughout this chapter.

Among the other Maskilim who were deemed to be worthy of a biography in nineteenth-century Haskalah was Isaac Euchel. The author of a biography of Euchel, Meir Halevi Letteris, felt a special empathy to, if not an affinity with, Euchel, the founding editor of *Hame'asef*. Letteris, an editor himself, had a special place in his heart for *Hame'asef*, and he reprinted a new edition of volume one of *Hame'asef* for the year 1783/4.⁶⁹ His biography of Euchel was included in that edition of *Hame'asef*.

Typically, Letteris regarded Euchel as “having been called by God to be of help and usefulness through the wisdom of his work to the people who were groping in the dark in the past generation.”⁷⁰ Even if one reads this phrase as a *melitzah*, a lofty expression of customary exaggerated language, one cannot ignore the exaltation that Letteris accorded this early Maskil.

This is the way the three major personalities of early Haskalah were conceived in the nineteenth century. They achieved a prominent place in the Hebrew Parnassus, an indication of their reception and acceptance, in an acknowledgment of their lasting contribution to the revival of the Jewish people in modern times.

Gottlober, who did recycle early Haskalah books, underscored the importance of these (and other) reprints in his introduction to the 1860 edition of Euchel's biography of Mendelssohn.⁷¹ He wrote that readers were not satisfied with the contemporary output of writings, supposed to “restore the past to its pristine splendor.” Instead, Gottlober added sarcastically, they

⁶⁸ Also a biography on Wessely by Yaḥbik [acronym], “Toldot Rabbi Naphtali” [The Life Story of R. Naphtali], *Hamagid* [The Herald], I (1857), issues 26, 30, 33, 36, 37, 51; *Sefer Divrei Shalom Ve'emet* [The Book of Words of Peace and Truth] (Warsaw, 1886), pp. 1–31, Kalman Schulmann's edition; Shlomo Mandelkern, “Toldot Rabbi Naphtali Herz Weisel Z.TZ.L.” [The Life Story of R. N. H. W. of Blessed Memory], *Ha'asif* [The Harvest], III (1887), published in Warsaw in 1886, pp. 404–417.

⁶⁹ Meir Halevi Letteris, “Toldot Heḥacham R. Itzik Euchel Z.L.” [The Life Story of the Pundit R. I. E. of Blessed Memory], *Hame'asef Lishnat HTKMD* [*Hame'asef* for the year HTKMD (1784)], second edition (Vienna, 1862), pp. 41–47.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁷¹ See footnote 62 above.

restored the printed paper to its original rags. Consequently, Gottlober praised the publisher, Michael Wolf, for reviving the lost books of Israel by reprinting them. In this series of reprints, in addition to Mendelssohn's biography, Gottlober published his translation of Mendelssohn's *Jerusalem* into Hebrew and thus addressed the need to have Mendelssohn's views of Judaism, originally published in German, presented to the Hebrew reader.⁷²

Publishers' Listings and Personal Libraries

Publishers' catalogues: Certainly, a reliable source of information about the availability and possible circulation of early Haskalah books and their reprints is contemporary publishers' catalogues and lists of books. These catalogues may provide insight about the nineteenth-century maskilic 'Jewish book shelf.' However, very few such catalogues and book lists survived, and they are not readily available and need to be searched.

An early list of available books published by the Haskalah publishing house in Berlin, *דפוס חברה חנוך נערים* (*Defus Hevrat Hinuch Ne'arim* — The Printing Press of the Society for the Education of Youth),⁷³ is found at the end of Nahman Barash's book *Ein Mishpat* (Fountain of Justice), published in 1796, and it reflects the maskilic book production at the turn of the century.⁷⁴ It lists some 54 books published from 1784 to 1796 that were still in print; however, it does not list books that were out of print. Some of the books which were cited above, by Wessely (*Hochmat Shlomo*, *Yen Levanon*), Linda (*Reisheet Limudim*), and Brill (Psalms), among others, were still available at that time.

According to a statement at the end of the list, these and other books, old and new, could be purchased from Isaac Satanow who lived above the printing press of the Society, in Daniel Jaffe's building in Berlin.

A few years later, the Viennese publisher Anton Schmid who had one of the most enterprising and productive printing presses which issued hundreds of volumes of Hebrew books and pamphlets, published a catalogue of books in print. It was a two-page announcement, printed in 1807, and titled "Kol Mevaser" (An Announcement), about the publication

⁷² Michael Wolf, publisher, *Zmirot Israel*, including *Toldot Hehacham Hahoker Elohi Rabenu Moshe Ben Menahem*, in an unpaginated introduction. See note 62 above.

⁷³ Verlag der jüdischen Freyschule.

⁷⁴ Nahman ben Simḥah [Barash] [Simmonsohn]. *Ein Mishpat* [Fountain of Justice] (Berlin, 1796).

of Mahzorim (High Holy Days and Festivals prayer books) with German translation by Wolf Heidenheim. In 1815 Schmid printed a long notice about his plans to publish classical commentaries on the Talmud, the text of the Mishnah, and an essay on the grammar of the Mishnah by Shlomo Loewisohn, and offered plans to order the books by pre-subscription ("prenumerantri").⁷⁵

A list of available books at Schmid's publishing house was printed in *Bikurei Ha'itim* volumes one and two (1820, 1821), which is indicative of the diversified output of his printing presses.⁷⁶ The books include editions of Scriptures, Talmud, rabbinics, Sidurim, Mahzorim, and other religious books, some of which were edited by Maskilim, as well as books by Wessely (*Shirei Tiferet*), and most of Ben Zeev's books (Introduction to Scriptures, lexicons and textbooks) which were mentioned above, and by other Maskilim.

The Prague publisher Moshe Landau issued eight-page catalogues in 1836 and 1839, from which we can learn about the 'Jewish book shelf' at that time. It consisted mostly of religious books: Bible, Mishnah, Talmud, Hagadot, Slihot, Tehilim, and commentaries. Some Haskalah books are listed as well, such as Wessely's *Shirei Tiferet*, Shalom Hacohen's *Torat Lashon Ivrit*, a textbook for the study of the Hebrew language and its grammar, which was cited above, and issues of *Kerem Hemed*, which were then published by Landau.⁷⁷

Distributions of books were done, naturally, by booksellers some of whom were listed as having books for sale, as reported by Rosenthal and some cultural historians.⁷⁸ However, their lists of books did not survive.

⁷⁵ Anton Schmid, *Kol Mevasser* [An Announcement] ([Vienna], 1807), a two-page announcement found at the Jewish National and University Library, No. L1047; Anton Schmid, "Moda'ah" [Notice] ([Vienna], 1815), a 4-page folio-size notice found at the Jewish National and University Library, No. L736. See, Pelli, *Bikurei Ha'itim — Bikurei Hahaskalah*, p. 34, n. 92, 93; p. 48, n. 156.

⁷⁶ "Reshimah" [List], *Bikurei Ha'itim*, I (1820/1), pp. 205–208; II (1821/2), pp. 227–228.

⁷⁷ Moshe Landau, "Reshimat Hasefarim Shenidpesu Bevet Hadefus Shel Landau" [List of Books Printed in Landau's Printing Press] (Prague, 1836), 8 pages; a similar catalogue was printed in 1839; both are found in the Jewish National Library in Jerusalem, numbered L2428 and L2429. See note 37 above.

⁷⁸ Eliezer Rosenthal's *Yode'a Sefer* [Scholar (One Familiar with Books)], included in M. Roest, *Catalog der Hebraica und Judaica aus der L. Rosenthal'schen Bibliothek*, I (Amsterdam, 1966; based on the 1875 edition), p. 266, n. 1374, reports of a list of books for sale at the bookseller Hayim Roles. See A. M. Haberman, *Masechet Sofrim Vesifrut* [Tractate (on) Authors and Literature] (Jerusalem, 1977), pp. 286–287; Mordechai Zalkin, *Ba'alot Hashahar* [A New Dawn] (Jerusalem, 2000), pp. 159–164; Zeev Gries, *Hasefer Kesochen Tarbut Bashanim 1700–1900* [The Book as a Cultural Agent 1700–1900] (Israel, 2002), pp. 32–37.

Obviously, further search for more catalogues will have to be conducted to help establish a more comprehensive conclusion.

Personal libraries: Searching for information about personal libraries and special collections of Hebrew books may provide interesting results. For example, in 1783/4 *Hame'asef* published several notices about Judaica libraries.⁷⁹ It is known that some of the Maskilim in the nineteenth century, such as Joseph Perl (1773–1839), had comprehensive libraries in Hebraica and Judaica.⁸⁰ After Perl's death, *Kerem Hemed* printed an appeal to all authors to send their books to Perl's library.⁸¹ Further investigation of the contents of these libraries can give us some information about the availability of early Haskalah books at least to the owners of the libraries and the ones who could gain access to them. In mid nineteenth century there is a report on a major research library that Mordechai Shmuel Girondi had, which he made available to scholars and Maskilim; however, following his death in 1852, access to it was denied.⁸²

A list of one such library, “one of the most magnificent libraries in the land,” was published in 1857 by Gabriel Polak (1803–1869). *Heshek Shlomo* contains a list of the library of Shlomo Rubens which was offered for sale; it lists 1057 books in Hebrew plus manuscripts and books in Dutch and German.⁸³ Among various Scriptures, it lists, for example, the maskilic edition of Proverbs, Job, and the five scrolls with German translation and commentary by Euchel, Satanow and Wolfsohn, published in Berlin (p. 96, No. 1037).

The Hebrew critic and editor Reuven Brainin reported in his memoirs that he had started some sort of a ‘library’.⁸⁴ Lilienblum also related in his autobiography about his personal library.⁸⁵

⁷⁹ See Pelli, *Sha'ar Lahaskalah, Mafte'ah Mu'ar Lehame'asef*, pp. 145–146.

⁸⁰ Joseph Klausner, *Historia Shel Hasifrut Ha'ivrit Hahadashah* [History of Modern Hebrew Literature], II (Jerusalem, 1960), p. 290; Kressel, *Cyclopedia of Modern Hebrew Literature*, II, p. 677 (on Perl's library); Zalkin, *Ba'alot Hashahar*, pp. 246–255; Gries, *Hasefer Kesochen Tarbut*, pp. 70–71, 77–78.

⁸¹ *Kerem Hemed*, V (1841), p. [256].

⁸² *Ibid.*, VII (1854), letter 13, pp. 87–93.

⁸³ Gabriel Polak. *Heshek Shlomo* [Shlomo's Desire] (Amsterdam, 1857). The quotation is from Polak's introduction.

⁸⁴ Re'uven Brainin, “Zichronot” [Memoirs], *Ketavim Nivharim* [Select Writings] (Merḥavyah, Israel, 1965), pp. 415–418.

Established catalogues: Some of the well known Judaica and Hebraica catalogues were composed in the latter part of the nineteenth century, and they reflect the holdings of some major European libraries at that time.

Thus, Steinschneider's catalogue of the holdings in the Bodleiana was written from 1852 to 1860; Zedner's catalogue of Hebrew books at the British Museum was composed in 1867, and Roest's catalogue of the Rosenthaliana library in Amsterdam was done in 1875. Similarly, some other catalogues: Ben-Yaakov's *Otzar Hasefarim* (Treasure of Books) was published in 1880.⁸⁶ Wiener's catalogue of the Friedlandiana library was started in 1893, and Zeitlin's Judaica Catalogue was published in 1891.⁸⁷

Those are bibliographical treasures for our assessment of the availability of these books in the respective libraries. Some of the catalogues are annotated with invaluable information about these books. These catalogues reflect the inventory of books in their respective times, but these books that were in these respective libraries were not available to Maskilim in other locations.

Of course, for more updated information about Haskalah books that were printed in the nineteenth century, one should also consult Hayim Dov Berish Friedberg, *Toldot Hadefus Hat'vri Be'arim Ha'eleh Shebe'eiropah* (The History of the Hebrew Press in These Cities in Europe), published in 1937, and also the volume *Toldot Hadefus Ha'ivri* (The History of the Hebrew Press) that was published in 1935.⁸⁸ Listing of all Hebrew books published from 1469 to 1863 in each year may be found in Vinograd's

⁸⁵ Moshe Leib Lilienblum, *Hatot Ne'urim* [Youthful Sins], *Kol Kitvei Moshe Leib Lilienblum* [The Complete Writings of M.L.L.], II (Krakow, 1912), p. 224; also the first edition, *Hatot Ne'urim* (Vienna, 1876).

⁸⁶ Isaac Eisik Ben Yaakov, *Otzar Hasefarim* [Treasure of Books] (Vilna, 1880).

⁸⁷ M. Steinschneider, *Catalogus Librorum Hebraeorum in Bibliotheca Bodleiana*, II (Berlin, 1852–1860. Facsimile ed.: Berlin, 1931; Hildesheim, 1964); J. Zedner, *Catalogue of the Hebrew Books in the Library of the British Museum* (London, 1867); Julius Fürst, *Bibliotheca Judaica*, II (Leipzig, 1851); M. Roest, *Catalog der Hebraica und Judaica aus der L. Rosenthal'schen Bibliothek*, I (Amsterdam, 1966; based on the 1875 edition), which includes Eliezer Rosenthal's *Yode'a Sefer*; William Zeitlin, *Bibliotheca Hebraica*, I (Leipzig, 1891); Samuel Wiener, *Catalogus Librorum Impressorum Hebraeorum in Museo Asiatico, Bibliotheca Friedlandiana* (Petropoli [St. Peterburg], 1893).

⁸⁸ Hayim Dov Berish Friedberg, *Toldot Hadefus Ha'ivri Be'arim Ha'eleh Shebe'eiropah* [The History of the Hebrew Press in These Cities in Europe] (Antwerpen, 1937), such as the books published by Anton Schmid, pp. 95–99, and also the volume *Toldot Hadefus Ha'ivri* [The History of the Hebrew Press], by the same author, that was published in 1935.

Otzar Hasefer Ha'ivri (Thesaurus of the Hebrew Book).⁸⁹ Another bibliographical source is Shunami's *Mafte'ah Hamaftehot* (Bibliography of Jewish Bibliographies).⁹⁰ For the current chapter I consulted Friedberg's *Bet Eked Sefarim* and the on-line catalogue of the National Jewish and University Library.

Reprints of Literary Works

From a literary point of view, the acceptance and reception of original works of prose and poetry may be established on the basis of their republication at a later date. One of the most impressive examples of a literary work that was republished is Wessely's biblical epos, *Shirei Tiferet*, which was cited before. Its first part was originally published in Berlin in 1789, and then the complete edition was published posthumously in 1809. Subsequently, it appeared in seven editions.⁹¹

The publisher of the 1829 edition, Moshe Landau (1788–1852), a maskilic author and scholar himself, expressed exceedingly lofty assessment of Wessely's epos. He said, as might be expected of a publisher and a Maskil, that even if a writer would fly as high as a eagle, he would not get to Wessely's heights; "is there one such poet who could create poetry like him?", he asked rhetorically.⁹²

Moreover, as will be discussed later, Wessely's masterpiece inspired many Haskalah authors to write similar biblical epics and dramas, which is a clear indication of the acceptance of Wessely and the reception of his neo-biblical style and themes.

⁸⁹ Yeshayahu Vinograd, *Otzar Hasefer Ha'ivri* [Thesaurus of the Hebrew Book] (Jerusalem, 1994).

⁹⁰ Shlomo Shunami, *Mafte'ah Hamaftehot* [Bibliography of Jewish Bibliographies] (Jerusalem, 1965).

⁹¹ Friedberg, *Bet Eked Sefarim*, III, p. 997. Among the editions which I have: Naphtali Herz Wessely, *Shirei Tiferet* [Songs of Glory] (Berlin, 1789); (Prague, 1809); (Prague, 1829); (Warsaw, 1840/1); (Lemberg, 1844); (Przemysl, 1871). The Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem lists 9 editions, including the first edition and selections that appeared in Berlin in 1922. Zeitlin, *Bibliotheca Hebraica*, I, p. 417, reports of 8 editions. The Rosenthaliana Library has a manuscript of *Shirei Tiferet* with the date 1808/9, numbered Ros. 199.

⁹² Moshe Halevi Landau, "Hakdamat Hamadpis" [Printer's Introduction], Helek Shishi Misefer *Shirei Tiferet* [Part Six of *Shirei Tiferet* (Songs of Glory)] (Prague, 1829), pp. vi–vii.

Another belletristic work, *Masa Ba'rav* (Travail in an Arab Land), written in the genre of the travelogue by the Italian Maskil Shmuel Romanelli (1757–1814), was printed in nine editions (including in the twentieth century) since its initial publication in 1792.⁹³ It was a very vivid depiction of an exotic land, exploring the lives of Jews and Arabs in North Africa.

Meir Halevi Letteris wrote an introduction to the second edition that was issued in 1834 by the publishing house of Anton Schmid, where Letteris worked as a proofreader. He praised the book as “one of the most precious treasures which we have in the Hebrew language.” Romanelli, he wrote, “made an eternal name for himself in the world.” Letteris praised Romanelli’s talents as a writer who followed in the Italian tradition of great writers from de Rossi to the Luzzattos and Reggio. He observed the scarcity of the book in his time, and thus he stated that the new edition should make the lovers of book and language very happy.⁹⁴ Letteris noted that some of Romanelli’s other books, too, were even scarcer.

As in the cases of publishers of new editions who praised their books, one can expect such an enthusiastic assessment. However, the very need for the new edition speaks for itself. The publication in consecutive years in two distant centers, Vienna (1834) and Vilna (1835), and then more editions in subsequent years, is another indication of the demand for its republication. The spread of locations, as seen in these new editions, is very important in the discussion of reception and acceptance.

The biblical drama *Meluchat Sha'ul* (Saul’s Reign), by Joseph Ha’efrati, which was published first in 1794, was re-issued in twelve different editions.⁹⁵ A notion of the distribution of this edition may be obtained from a list of 156 subscribers of the first edition whose names and locations are printed in it; they subscribed to 191 copies.⁹⁶ Some of the

⁹³ Including in the twentieth century. First edition: Shmuel Romanelli, *Masa Ba'rav* [Travail in an Arab Land] (Berlin, 1792); (Vienna, 1834); (Vilna, 1835); (Warsaw, 1848); (Warsaw, 1853); (Cambridge, London and Leipzig, 1886); (Warsaw, 1926); (New York, 1926); *Ketavim Nivharim* [Select Writings], Schirmann’s edition (Jerusalem, 1968). Translated into English: *Travail in an Arab Land*, Yedida and Norman Stillman, trans. (Tuscaloosa, 1989). See Pelli, *Sugot Vesugyot Besifrut Hahaskalah Ha’ivrit* [Kinds of Genre in Haskalah Literature: Types and Topics] (Israel, 1999), p. 208.

⁹⁴ Meir Halevi Letteris, “Davar El Hakore” [A Word to the Reader], *Masa Ba'rav* (1834), unpaginated.

⁹⁵ Joseph Ha’efrati, *Meluchat Sha'ul* [Saul’s Reign] (Vienna, 1794); (Lemberg, 1820); (Vienna, 1829); (Warsaw, 1871). Friedberg, *Bet Eked Sefarim*, II, p. 608, reports of twelve editions. The Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem lists 9 editions, including the first edition and the 1969 edition which was issued in Dorot Library in Jerusalem with an introduction by Gershon Shaked.

⁹⁶ [List of Subscribers], *Meluchat Sha'ul* (1794), unpaginated.

subscribers received several copies. The list includes two Kehilah libraries — in Prague and in Vienna, thus attesting to the public availability of this book. For further discussion on subscribers, see below.

These new editions and many others are definitely impressive signs of acceptance, which will be elaborated upon below.

An introduction by the editor of this edition, the renowned writer Isaac Baer Levinsohn, spelled out, very much like Letteris in the above cited edition, that copies of the first edition of 1794 were extinct. To address the “thirst of the seekers of the Hebrew language who yearn for this precious composition,” and for the sake of expanding and enriching the Hebrew language, he undertook to publish this new edition.⁹⁷ Levinsohn emphasized also the quality of the printing, which is also stated by Letteris in the context of his reprint. Levinsohn asserted that this drama was highly acclaimed by Maskilim, and poets praised its beauty and its worth. It is a meritorious work, he stressed, due to its language, ideas and morality, which abide by the ‘fear of God,’ namely, written in the spirit of Jewish tradition. It was written by a “great poet,” he stated, unlike some vulgar or erotic poems which are prevalent in these days.

An important aspect of these works’ reception much beyond the nineteenth century is their republication in modern editions in the twentieth century with learned introductions and commentaries. The availability of these tomes in modern editions made them accessible to students and readers. Wessely’s epos was the subject of a book of criticism by Noah Rosenbloom,⁹⁸ while Romanelli’s book was translated into English with an introduction by Yedidah and Norman Stillman.⁹⁹

Imitation of Styles and Forms Prevalent in Early Haskalah

Literary impact: Another level of reception may be assessed by studying the influence of early Haskalah authors and their writings on their nineteenth-century counterparts. It pertains to literary emulation of style, themes, and literary genres that were prevalent in early Haskalah. Thus, it will be rewarding to look into the impact of Wessely’s *Shirei Tiferet* in its

⁹⁷ Isaac Baer Levinsohn, “El Kore Maskil” [To an Enlightened Reader], *Meluchat Sha’ul* (1820), unpaginated.

⁹⁸ Noah Rosenbloom, *Ha’epos Hamikra’i Me’idan Hahaskalah Vehaparshanut* [The Exodus Epic of the Enlightenment and Exegesis: Thought and Exegesis in Wessely’s “Songs of Splendor”] (Jerusalem, 1983).

⁹⁹ Romanelli, *Travail in an Arab Land*, Yedida and Norman Stillman, trans.

many editions on other biblical epics written and published in the nineteenth century.

Following Wessely's eight editions of *Shirei Tiferet*, it is generally assumed that its impact prompted many writers to compose similar biblically themed epics. The literary historian Fischel Lachover reported that there were some twenty imitations of Wessely's *Shirei Tiferet* while Klausner argued that some writers were influenced directly by the Bible itself and not necessarily by Wessely.¹⁰⁰ Nevertheless, Wessely's work definitely served as a guide.

Even other literary forms, such as biblical drama, may have been influenced by Wessely. Joseph Ha'efrati's *Meluchat Sha'ul* is a biblical drama which has some stamp of Wessely, as suggested by Gershon Shaked.¹⁰¹ Ha'efrati's indebtedness to early Haskalah writers is noted in his introduction to *Meluchat Sha'ul* where he cited both Wessely and Euchel as advocating the need for poetry because through poetry and *melitzah* — rhetoric — one is able to achieve an understanding of the Almighty.¹⁰²

Another writer whose work reflects some of Wessely's orientation is Shalom Hacohen, a prolific poet, writer and editor of *Hame'asef* and later of *Bikurei Ha'itim*. In 1807 he published two long biblical poems on Abraham and David and a drama on Jezebel and Ahab which have the overall title *Mata'ei Kedem Al Admat Tzafon* (The Orchards of Ancient Times on Northern Soil).¹⁰³ The two biblical epics follow the pattern and structure that had been established in Wessely's *Shirei Tiferet*.

Hacohen's attitude toward Wessely seems to show his indebtedness to Wessely whom he followed in his footsteps. In Hacohen's introduction to his epic, written in German, he argued for the viability of Hebrew poetry which, he said, flourished recently with the work of Wessely, referring to *Shirei Tiferet* as "Mosaide." Upon the death of Wessely it seemed that Hebrew poetry passed away as well. However, Hacohen asserted that the language will continue to flourish as long as there are people who are devoted to it.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ F. Lachover, *Toldot Hasifrut Ha'ivrit Haḥadashah* [The History of Modern Hebrew Literature], I (Tel Aviv, 1928), pp. 76, 146; Klausner, *Historiah Shel Hasifrut Ha'ivrit Hahadashah*, I, p. 148.

¹⁰¹ Gershon Shaked, "Mavo" [Preface], *Meluchat Sha'ul*, Dorot Edition (Jerusalem, 1969), p. 18.

¹⁰² Joseph Ha'efrati, "Hakdamah Umevo Hasefer" [Introduction and Preface to the Book], *Meluchat Sha'ul* (1794), unpaginated introduction, referring to Wessely as "the great and famous poet" and to Euchel as "Hashalem," the perfect one; *Meluchat Sha'ul*, Dorot Edition (1969), p. 41.

¹⁰³ Shalom Hacohen, *Mata'ei Kedem Al Admat Tzafon* [The Orchards of Ancient Times on Northern Soil] (Rödelheim, 1807); (Zolkiew, 1818).

¹⁰⁴ Shalom Hacohen, "Vorrede," *Mata'ei Kedem Al Admat Tzafon* (Rödelheim, 1807), pp. vi-vii.

In 1834 Shalom Hacohen published another epos on the life of David, *Nir David* (David's Lamp [Light]), which, according to Lachover, differed distinctly from Wessely's *Shirei Tiferet*. Nevertheless, some indebtedness to Wessely still exists as evidenced, for example, in the subtitle: *Nir David* "Songs of glory [reflecting the title of Wessely's epos]... to David ben Yishai."¹⁰⁵

Some authors openly acknowledged their indebtedness to early Haskalah writers such as Wessely. For example, The Breslau Maskil, Suesskind Raschkow (? –1836), who wrote several biblical epics and dramas, affirmed Wessely's influence on his work in the introduction to his biblical epic *Hayei Shimshon* (Samson's Life), in 1824. He acknowledged his shortcomings in such epics, following the customary humility of an epigon, but nevertheless, he did not refrain "from going in the footsteps of the head of our contemporary poets the author of *Shirei Tiferet*."¹⁰⁶

Even as late as 1853, the Amsterdam Maskil Gabriel Polak acknowledged in the introduction to *Kikayon Leyonah* (Jonah's Gourd), an epic on the biblical story of Jonah, that he followed in the footsteps of Wessely:¹⁰⁷

I tried in [the poems about Jonah] my modest effort to go in the heels of the sublime scholar, the great sage in Torah and the holy tongue, the unequalled poet in recent generations, the glorified and honorable rabbi and teacher Naphtali Herz Weisel of blessed memory, who has no parallel in his delightful book, *Shirei Tiferet*, ranking high in Jeshurun for eternal glory.

Polak relied on Euchel's review of *Shirei Tiferet* in *Hame'asef*, quoting his statement on Wessely's epic work that "no one did anything similar since the Israelites were exiled from their land," thus showing his familiarity with the historical reception of Wessely and *Shirei Tiferet*.¹⁰⁸

Polak further detailed how he followed Wessely's concept of the biblical epos, in its ethical calling and its rhythm (p. v). His book opens with a motto, citing Wessely's modest statement in his introduction to *Shirei Tiferet*: "Even if these poems are quite ordinary and one cannot be

¹⁰⁵ Shalom Hacohen, *Nir David* [David's Lamp (Light)] (Vienna, 1834), on the title page. See Lachover, *Toldot Hasifrut Ha'ivrit Hahadashah*, I, pp. 101–102.

¹⁰⁶ Suesskind Raschkow, *Hayei Shimshon* [Samson's Life] (Breslau, 1824), p. 6.

¹⁰⁷ Gabriel Polak, *Kikayon Leyonah* [Jonah's Gourd] (Amsterdam, 1853).

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, "Hakdamah" [Introduction], p. iii. He quotes from Euchel's review of Wessely's *Shirei Tiferet* in *Hame'asef*, VI (1790), pp. 210–221, 346–352.

proud of them, nevertheless they will well serve the beginners in studying the lucidity of the language” (on the title page).

Even if Polak attempted to promote his own book by such an acknowledgment, it nevertheless serves as an indication of some affinity to Wessely’s epos and his continuous influence.

An awareness of the tradition of epic writing in Haskalah literature is reflected in Isachar Beer Schlesinger’s (1773–1836) introduction to his epic *Hahashmona’im* (The Hasmoneans), published in 1816. He acknowledged that he followed Wessely in his use of the meter and cited the poetic convention of Moshe Hayim Luzzatto’s (1707–1747) *Layesharim Tehilah* (Praise to the Righteous).¹⁰⁹

Among other epic writers was Moshe Mendelssohn-Frankfurt (1782–1861) with his epic “Toldot Yoseph” (Life Story of Joseph) which was published in his *Pnei Tevel* (Face of the World) (1872).¹¹⁰

An early biblical drama by David Franco Mendes (1713–1792), *Gemul Ataliah* (The Punishment of Ataliah), which was published first in 1770, was republished in 1800 and 1860.¹¹¹ It is obvious that the biblical epic was in vogue for some time in the nineteenth century, following the early Maskilim.

Imitation of Genres Prevalent in Early Haskalah

Literary genres: Emulating literary genres that were prevalent in the early Haskalah by later writers is another indication of literary acceptance of significance. We note, for example, that some writers resorted to “The Dialogues of the Dead,” a popular genre in eighteenth-century Enlightenment and Haskalah literature.¹¹² This genre recurred in the writings of late Maskilim throughout the nineteenth century.

Shlomo Loewisohn wrote a didactic dialogue of the dead, *Sihah Be’olam Haneshamot* (Dialogue in the World of the Souls), which focused on a grammatical discussion between David Kimhi and Joel Brill (1811). Not only is it an emulation of the genre, but it shows the author’s high esteem of Brill who is considered to be the equal of the medieval grammarian and commentator, David Kimhi. In addition, this genre served

¹⁰⁹ Isachar Beer Schlesinger, *Hahashmona’im* [The Hasmoneans] (Prague, 1816), unpaginated introduction.

¹¹⁰ Moshe Mendelssohn-Frankfurt, “Toldot Yoseph” [Life Story of Joseph], *Pnei Tevel* [Face of the World] (Amsterdam, 1872), pp. 111–138. It was written in the early part of the century.

¹¹¹ David Franco Mendes, *Gemul Ataliah* [The Punishment of Ataliah] (Amsterdam, 1770), was republished by Anton Schmid in Vienna in 1800 and again in Warsaw in 1860.

¹¹² On the “Dialogues of the Dead” see Moshe Pelli, *In Search of Genre: Hebrew Enlightenment and Modernity* (Lanham, 2005), ch. 5, pp. 213–244.

as an indication of the staunch commitment to the renewal of the Hebrew language undertaken by the early Maskilim and continuously embraced by their followers in subsequent decades.¹¹³

It is of importance to note that these phenomena highlight the use of the Maskilim's 'forefathers' as protagonists in fictional works. They perform their roles laying the foundations of Haskalah, setting its tone, tenets and topics for their followers, overcoming the boundaries of time through fiction.

Tuvyah Feder (1760–1817) resorted to the use of this genre in a satiric "Sihah," *Kol Mehazezim* (Voice of the Archers) which was published in 1853 but initially written in 1813.¹¹⁴ It is an attack on Mendel Lefin's translation into Yiddish of the book of Mishlei. As in Loewisoohn's didactic dialogue of the dead, Feder employed some of the leading figures of Haskalah as his protagonists: Moses Mendelssohn, Naphtali Herz Wessely, and Isaac Euchel, which again testifies to their place in the creative mind of writers in the nineteenth century.

Similarly, Juda Leib Mieses (1798–1831) wrote "Sihah Be'olam Haneshamot" (Dialogue in the World of the Souls) which is included in *Kine'at Ha'emet* (Zeal for the Truth), published in 1828.¹¹⁵ And Meir Halevi Altar published his "Sihah" in *Bikurei Ha'itim* (First Fruits of the Times), in 1825/6, as a testimony of a continuous impact of early Haskalah.¹¹⁶

The genre lingered on to the second half of the nineteenth century. The prolific writer and editor Peretz Smolenskin wrote a "Sihah" in *Hashahar* (Dawn) in 1869, and also, Juda Leib Gordon published a "Sihah" in

¹¹³ Shlomo Loewisoohn, *Sihah Be'olam Haneshamot* [Dialogue in the World of the Souls] (Prague, 1811), was serialized first in *Hame'asef*, IX, X (1810–1811); A shorter "Sihah" was published by Itzik Aurbach in *Hame'asef*, VIII (No. 1, 1809), pp. 93–95.

¹¹⁴ Tuvyah Feder, *Kol Mehazezim* [Voice of the Archers] (Lemberg, 1853); (Lemberg, 1875). See discussion on this dialogue in Pelli, *In Search of Genre: Hebrew Enlightenment and Modernity*, ch. 5, pp. 213–244.

¹¹⁵ Juda Mieses, "Sihah Be'olam Haneshamot" [A Dialogue in the World of the Souls], *Kine'at Ha'emet* [Zeal for the Truth] (Vienna, 1828).

¹¹⁶ Meir Halevi Altar published his "Sihah" in *Bikurei Ha'itim* [First Fruits of the Times], VI (1825/6), pp. 5–24. Discussion on the various dialogues is found in my book *Sugot Vesugyot Besifrut Hahaskalah Ha'ivrit*, chapter 2, p. 49, n. 6, 7.

Hashahar in 1877, as did Yaakov Sobel, in 1872, Reuven Asher Braudes, and later, Simon Halkin, and others.¹¹⁷

Literary motifs: A study of literary motifs may be rewarding as well, and it may show some affinity to an early literature. Such is the use of the “spring” motif, prevalent in the early Haskalah, which continued to be cited in Haskalah poetry throughout the nineteenth century.¹¹⁸

Thus, Shmuel Zunvel Seligsohn wrote a long poem devoted to spring, dwelling on the tranquility of the individual in nature, removed from his daily difficulties. His book, *Ha'aviv* (Spring), was published in 1845. Mordechai Strelisker wrote his *Pirhei Aviv* (Spring Flowers), a manuscript, in 1827, and Abraham Gottlober published his *Pirhei Aviv* (Spring Flowers) in 1837.¹¹⁹ Spring represented both personal and national renewal. Studying other motifs, such as dawn, may prove to be rewarding as well.

Literary Assessment by Writers and Critics; Authors' Memoirs about Reception

Following are additional sources for insights into Haskalah reception:

Literary analyses: Comprehensive literary analyses and critical discussions of early German Maskilim and their writings in the subsequent century serve as good indicators for reception and acceptance.

One important assessment of Hebrew poetry is found in Shlomo Loewisoohn's literary and aesthetics analysis in *Melitzat Yeshurun* (The Rhetoric of Jeshurun) in 1816. Dealing with theories of poetics and rhetoric, Loewisoohn discussed Wessely's literary work as exemplary. He included citations from *Shirei Tiferet* among citations from biblical and world

¹¹⁷ Peretz Smolenskin, “Sihah,” *Hashahar* [Dawn], I (No. 3, 1869), p. 28. Also, Juda Leib Gordon published a “Sihah” in *Hashahar*, VIII (1877), pp. 205–225, as did Yaakov Sobel, in 1872, and R. A. Braudes, Simon Halkin, and others. In 1988, J. H. Biletzki published a dialogue of the dead in Hebrew.

¹¹⁸ See discussion on this phenomena in the first part of the period in the chapter on *Hame'asef*'s poetry in my book *Dor Hame'asim Beshahar Hahaskalah* [The Circle of *Hame'asef*'s Writers at the Dawn of Haskalah] (Israel, 2001), pp. 42–45, and on its development in *Bikurei Ha'itim* — *Bikurei Hahaskalah*, pp. 74–75, 108. See Joseph Ha'efrati's article “Darchei Hate'ur Beshirat Hahaskalah” [Descriptive Ways in Haskalah Poetry], *Hasifrut* [Literature], II (1, September 1969), pp. 26–39; also published in his book *Hamarot Vehalashon* [Sights and Language] (Tel Aviv, 1977).

¹¹⁹ Examples of poetry devoted to spring: Shmuel Zunvel Seligsohn, *Ha'aviv* [Spring] (Berlin, 1845); Mordechai Strelisker, *Pirhei Aviv* [Spring Flowers] (Brody, 1827), a manuscript found at the Jewish Theological Library, and Abraham Gottlober, *Pirhei Aviv* [Spring Flowers] (Jozefowje, 1837). Also S. Y. Rapoport published an adaptation into Hebrew of “Zimrat Aviv” [Spring Singing], *Bikurei Ha'itim*, IV (1824/5), pp. 162–164.

literature, while referring to Wessely as the “perfect poet” and regarding his poetry as “sublime.”¹²⁰ It is indeed indicative of Wessely’s reception by the second decade of the nineteenth century as his poetry became part of the Hebrew literary canon.

At that time, Wessely was considered as one of the revivers of Hebrew literature. In his review of Hebrew letters and his contemporary writers in *Pnei Tevel*, Moshe Mendelssohn-Frankfurt assessed Wessely’s role in Hebrew literature, saying that Wessely was the reviver of Hebrew rhetoric and poetry.¹²¹ He asserted that Wessely’s poetry made its impact for generations to come and that Jewish poets learned from him to write excellent verses. Wessely’s unique contribution was in his creative works in Hebrew; he was a marvelously great poet, the critic wrote, as could be seen in his *Shirei Tiferet* (pp. 138–139).

Another indication that some of the early Haskalah writings became part of the accepted Hebrew literary canon, can be seen from an assessment of early Haskalah writing by the Galician poet Dov Ginzburg (1776–1811) in an essay on poetics. He cited Euchel’s poetical definitions of Wessely’s epos (from the former’s review published in *Hame’asef* in 1790), and redefined it as “heroic poem.” Ginzburg cited examples from Wessely’s writings and from *Hame’asef*, thus using both as exemplary writing. This is another indication of the impact of early Haskalah writings.¹²²

Nineteenth-century Haskalah writings have numerous expressions of appreciation of Wessely’s contribution. One such example is found in 1828 in Shlomo Yehudah Rapoport’s (1790–1867) assessment of Wessely in *Bikurei Ha’itim*. Rapoport thought highly of *Shirei Tiferet* which he considered as a continuation of classical Jewish creativity. He suggested that Wessely’s epos may be read as *piyutim* during the month of Nisan.¹²³

¹²⁰ Shlomo Loewisohn, *Melitzat Yeshurun* [The Rhetoric of Jeshurun] (Vienna, 1816), pp. 52b, 55a.

¹²¹ Moshe Mendelssohn-Frankfurt, *Pnei Tevel* [The Face of the World] (Amsterdam, 1872), p. 138. While his book was published in the 1870s, he wrote it mostly in the 1820s.

¹²² B. G. of Brody [Dov Ginzburg] in his introduction to Moshe Hayim Luzzatto’s *Sefer Leshon Limudim* [Book of Learned Language] (Stanisławów, 1810; my edition: Sdilikov, 1826), pp. 1–14.

¹²³ *Bikurei Ha’itim*, VIII (1828/9), p. 184. On the reception of Wessely and M. H. Luzzatto, see Arnold Band, “The Beginning of Modern Hebrew Literature: Perspectives on ‘Modernity,’” *AJS Review*, XIII (Spring-Fall 1988), pp. 1–26.

Maskilim's memoirs: Additional insights for assessing the early Haskalah's acceptance in the nineteenth century are based on Maskilim's memoirs.

These memoirs shed light on the circulation of Haskalah books, and specifically, address the question of the availability of early Maskilim's books and the volumes of *Hame'asef* to second and third generation Maskilim.

The Galician and Russian Maskil Abraham Gottlober reported in his memoirs that when he was ten years old, 35 years after Mendelssohn's death (in 1821), there were in his hometown copies of Mendelssohn's *Be'ur*, some of Wessely's books, Ben Zeev's grammar books, and volumes of *Hame'asef*. He also mentioned that he saw Saul Berlin's (1740–1794) original satiric work *Ktav Yosher* (An Epistle of Righteousness) which was published in 1795 and had not been republished in new edition.¹²⁴ But Gottlober was unique in that his father allowed him access to these books, whereas many young Maskilim did not have such privilege.

Autobiographies: Nineteenth-century autobiographies serve as another source of information. Mordechai Aharon Günzburg (1795–1846) related in his autobiography *Aviezer* that in his youth he had read Mendelssohn's *Phaedon*, and afterwards Mendelssohn gained esteem in his eyes as the best of all world's pundits. He then found "in one of the libraries" the book of Kohelet with Mendelssohn's commentary and that book infused in him the spirit of free thinking and search through reason.¹²⁵

Another autobiographer, Moshe Leib Lilienblum (1843–1910), reported that he had purchased the apocryphal book *Hochmat Shlomo* with Wessely's commentary *Ru'ah Hen*, and that he was very much impressed by it.

He also reported of having access to other Haskalah books which were originally printed in Koenigsberg — thus, transposing him metaphorically through this medium of literature closer to the center of Haskalah in Germany. Among other books, he also reported seeing Ben Zeev's *Talmud*

¹²⁴ Abraham Baer Gottlober, *Zichronot Umasa'ot* [Memoirs and Journeys], II, Dorot edition (Jerusalem, 1976), p. 72; Gottlober, *Zichronot Mimei Ne'urai* [Memoirs from My Youth], I (Warsaw, 1880), p. 26: on Ben Zeev's *Talmud Lashon Ivri*; p. 19: on Mendelssohn's commentary to *Be'ur Milot Hahigayon* [Commentary on Words of Logic] (pagination is erroneous); II (Warsaw, 1881), p. 11: on Wessely and *Hame'asfim*; III (Warsaw, 1881), p. 31: on Saul Berlin's satire in defense of Wessely, *Ktav Yosher* [Epistle of Righteousness] ([Berlin], [1794/5]), and Euchel's biography of Mendelssohn *Toldot Harambeman* [Life Story of Mendelssohn]; p. 34: on Euchel. Similarly in the Dorot edition: vol I, p. 78: on Ben Zeev's *Talmud Lashon Ivri*; pp. 81–82: on Mendelssohn's commentary to *Be'ur Milot Hahigayon*; p. 229: on *Ktav Yosher*.

¹²⁵ Mordechai Aharon Günzburg, *Aviezer* (Vilna, 1863/4), pp. 115–117.

Lashon Ivri, which was cited above.¹²⁶ Reuven Brainin (1862–1940), too, reported of the influence of Ben Zeev's *Talmud Lashon Ivri* on him as well as of Mendelssohn's *Be'ur*.¹²⁷

Accessibility of Haskalah books: We can assume that in the centers of Haskalah in the nineteenth century, some early Haskalah books have been handed over from one Maskil to another. In more remote and secluded places, there were apparently no Haskalah books unless owned by an established Maskil who lived there. Thus, Lilienblum, for example, related how he got acquainted with a young man who owned Haskalah books. Also Brainin wrote in his memoirs about a teacher-Maskil who had had in his possession "a trunk full of Haskalah literature," yet he mentioned the difficulties to get Haskalah books.¹²⁸ Brainin also reported on another Maskil's access to Haskalah books in his youth. In a brief biographical article on Mordechai David Bandstaedter, Brainin reported that the first books that this Maskil read in modern Hebrew literature in his youth were *Bikurei Ha'itim*, *Kochvei Yitzhak*, Letteris' books, and Wessely's *Shirei Tiferet*. Bandstaedter's acquaintance with modern Hebrew literature is said to have come to him rather late in his youth, after he had gotten to know several books in German and French.¹²⁹ Brainin testified that he, too, learned about the existence of modern Hebrew literature only when he turned sixteen (p. 133).

Another young writer, Mordechai Zeev Feierberg (1874–1899), wrote to Ahad Ha'am that when he grew up he did not have (Haskalah) books.¹³⁰

¹²⁶ Lilienblum, *Hatot Ne'urim*, *Kol Kitvei Moshe Leib Lilienblum*, II, pp. 219, 231; also the first edition, *Hatot Ne'urim* (Vienna, 1876). See my book *Bema'avkei Temurah* [Struggle for Change] (Tel Aviv, 1988), pp. 35–45.

¹²⁷ Re'uven Brainin, "Zichronot," *Ketavim Nivharim*, pp. 407, 477. However, we don't know which edition he refers to, yet for availability of Haskalah books, this information is important.

¹²⁸ Lilienblum, *Hatot Ne'urim*, *Kol Kitvei Moshe Leib Lilienblum*, II, p. 226: See additional editions in note 126, and Brainin, "Zichronot," *Ketavim Nivharim*, pp. 396–399, and elsewhere.

¹²⁹ Reuven Brainin, "M. D. Brandstaedter," *Kol Kitvei Reuven Brainin* [The Complete Writings of R. B.], II (New York, 1936), pp. 134 (the whole article: pp. 128–136).

¹³⁰ Mordechai Zeev Feierberg, "Tzror Michtavim El Ahad Ha'am" [Letters to Ahad Ha'am], *Kitvei Mordechai Zeev Feierberg* [The Writings of M. Z. F.] (Tel Aviv, n.d., 5th edition), p. 163.

Such testimonies, which should be further studied and explored, do indicate the availability of early Haskalah books, whether original editions or reprints, and their influence on the followers of Haskalah in the nineteenth century.

Why and where were they reprinted? As mentioned above, the limited distribution of Hebrew books may be explained as resulting from import restrictions enacted by several countries, such as the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Thus, we see the surge in Hebrew printing presses in Vienna at the early part of the nineteenth century; thus, books were ‘transformed,’ so to speak, from one Haskalah center to another through reprinting.¹³¹ The Maskilim in Prague, for example, reprinted Joel Brill’s grammar books — his verb tables and *Amudei Halashon* — as the need arose for such books for teaching the language.¹³²

Gottlober gave another explanation for republishing some of the old Haskalah books: the inadequacy of contemporary writings. He argued that readers were not satisfied with the quality of the writings of their time, and thus they demanded to revive the lost books of Israel by republishing them.¹³³

Distribution and dissemination of books: Distributions of books were done by booksellers and some of them were reported as having books for sale, as related by Rosenthal and some cultural historians.¹³⁴ For example, Yitzhak Shmuel Reggio reported in 1854 about the practice of distribution of books, Haskalah books included. He wrote that booksellers in Berlin would send ordered books to booksellers in Trieste.¹³⁵ He also asked his publisher, Anton Schmid, to send him 10 copies of his introduction to the Torah and he in turn sent them to his friends and colleagues.¹³⁶

Shimshon Halevi Bloch (1784–1845) was distributing and selling his own books and complained bitterly about the lack of interest in Hebrew books. He reported that in Russia and Poland people did not read books in Hebrew or other languages, neither in Torah nor external books of science.¹³⁷ Books on rhetoric were not in demand, he wrote, and reported that Moshe Hayim Luzzatto’s books on rhetoric, *Leshon Limudim* (A Learned Language), which was republished by Dov Ginzburg in some 400

¹³¹ See Pelli, *Bikurei Ha’itim – Bikurei Hahaskalah*, p. 21.

¹³² See note 33 above.

¹³³ See text near note 71 above.

¹³⁴ See note 78 above.

¹³⁵ *Kerem Hemed*, VII (1854), p. 1.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, I (1833), p. 79,

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, II (1836), p. 83.

or 500 copies, were left after his death with his widow because he could not sell them during his life.¹³⁸

As mentioned earlier, this study may be expanded to include detailed information about the circulation and dissemination of Haskalah books.

Distribution through pre-subscription ('prenumerantn'): One of the ways to insure wide distribution of books was the solicitation of pre-subscriptions by the author or his agents. This means facilitated advance payment that helped writers and publishers finance the printing of a given book. Usually, such book would contain a list of the pre-subscribers and their location as well as the number of copies they had ordered. Such lists provide data of the circulation and dissemination of early Haskalah books (as well as others).¹³⁹

An example of the information we can get from such listing appeared in Brill's *Sefer Zmirot Israel* (1791) which contains a very impressive list of over 530 names of pre-subscribers in various cities in Germany and abroad: Amsterdam, Warsaw, Prague, Riga, Strasbourg, Shklov, among others. There were multi-copies subscribers who ordered from 2 to 4 and 6, and even 30 copies. It also included a list of subscribers from various cities who ordered their copies through Shabtai Janov, a bookseller and distributor. He was cited as being "the publisher of this book," while it was printed in Berlin at the printing press of *Hevrat Hinuch Ne'arim*. All in all, there were some 700 pre-ordered copies of the first edition.¹⁴⁰ Among the known subscribers were Isaac Euchel, Isaac Satanow, David Friedländer, Shlomo Dubno, Shlomo Pappenheim, and Prof. Hertz. This list attests to the wide circulation of this book of maskilic origins. It has a long introduction of about 47 double pages on biblical poetry, singing and songs in ancient Israel, and descriptions of musical instruments used in the temple with illustrations.

Similarly, Satanow's Sidur, *Tefilah Mikol Hashanah* (Prayer for the Whole Year), also has a respectable list of over 400 pre-subscribers, with some who ordered several copies, from 2, to 5, 6, 12, 16, 20 and 30 copies.¹⁴¹ Totally, there were close to 600 copies ordered in advance from several cities in Germany and abroad: Amsterdam, Brody, Vilna, Vienna,

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 84. Moshe Hayim Luzzatto, *Leshon Limudim* [A Learned Language], Dov Ginzburg's edition (Sdilikov, 1836).

¹³⁹ See Berl Kagan, *Hebrew Subscription Lists* (New York, 1975).

¹⁴⁰ Brill, *Sefer Zmirot Israel* (1791), 12 unpaginated pages of listings.

¹⁴¹ Isaac Satanow, *Tefilah Mikol Hashanah* [Prayer for the Whole Year] (Berlin, 1785), 8 unpaginated pages of listings.

Copenhagen, Strasbourg, and others. This list, too, attests to the popularity of such items in the Jewish home, maskilic and otherwise.

Another way to secure pre-subscribers was done by Satanow who in 1794 established a society by the name מַרְפָּא נֶפֶשׁ (*Marpe Nefesh* – Cure for a Soul), for readers to join and subscribe to his editions of *Hakuzari* and *Moreh Nevuchim*, and some others.¹⁴² The preliminary list has 22 members and their contributions; among them were Euchel, Friedländer, and Prof. Hertz.

From the list published in Hacohen's book, *Mata'ei Kedem Al Admat Tzafon*, one can get an impression of the distribution of this book of *belles lettres* in the year of publication — 1807. The list contains 197 subscribers in 11 cities, of which 33 ordered several copies — the sum total of 303 copies. Among the subscribers there were several libraries and schools, and one subscriber who ordered 50 copies.¹⁴³ These are impressive numbers for this bi-lingual (Hebrew and German) epos. A further analysis of the list, its subscribers and their location, will give us a sample of the book's circulation.

It should be noted that publishers' catalogues offered options for pre-subscription. As mentioned above, in 1815, Schmid printed a notice about his plans to publish Hebrew books and offered the option to order his books by pre-subscription.¹⁴⁴

Subscription information: Among subscribers to Hebrew books we find, at times, dignitaries; for example, Gabriel Polak reported that King William III of the Netherland ordered 10 copies of his book.¹⁴⁵

Horizon of Expectation Change

This, however, changes in the 1860s upon the emergence of the critical approach to German Haskalah literature, expressed by such writers as Avraham Uri Kovner (1842–1909), Avraham Yaakov Papirna (1840–1919), and especially Peretz Smolenskin (1842–1885).

The trend started with Shalom Yaakov Abramovich's call to introduce literary criticism into Hebrew literature.¹⁴⁶ It is a demand to identify the nature of a given work and then weigh it critically within its own genre of writing and examine its writer for the qualities of writing in that particular genre. The criteria differ depending on the given kind of writing.

¹⁴² *Idem, Michtav Marpe Nefesh* [Epistle of Cure for a Soul] ([Berlin], 1794).

¹⁴³ Hacohen, "Verzeichnitz der Herren... Praenumeranten," *Mata'ei Kedem Al Admat Tzafon*, pp. x–xiii. Hacohen also printed a list of about 270 multi-copies subscribers in his bi-lingual edition of *Shorshei Emunah* (1815).

¹⁴⁴ See note 75 above and related text.

¹⁴⁵ Polak, Introduction, *Kikayon Leyonah*, p. viii.

¹⁴⁶ Shalom Yaakov Abramovich, "Kilkul Haminim" [Spoiled Lute], *Mishpat Shalom* [A Peaceful Judgment] (Vilna, 1860).

Abramovich aimed to criticize Eliezer Zweifel (1815–1888) and his book *Minim Ve'ugav* (Lute and Pipe).

Kovner took part in this school of criticism. He was one of the first critics who reviewed the development of Haskalah literature, acknowledging the revolutionary nature of the early Haskalah when compared to previous phenomena of Hebrew letters.¹⁴⁷ His criteria for identifying the innovative nature of that literature were:

- a. an interaction with modern European literatures of the time and keeping pace with them;
- b. their biblical translations which presented the beauty of Jewish heritage to all;
- c. revival of the Hebrew language which addressed all aspects of human emotions: love, hope, beauty;
- d. enjoyment by many readers of this new literature, thus attesting to its reception and acceptability.¹⁴⁸

While acknowledging the Haskalah's historical role, Kovner was highly critical of the literature it produced, based on his newly established poetics. Kovner represented a major change in the horizons of expectation. He no longer accepted the Maskilim's lofty and sublime poetry per sé, and argued that it lacked contents, inner ideas or new views. Their euphuistic language now seemed to him as dry and dull, and definitely not answering the demands of modern literature.

Kovner argued that the early Haskalah writers' goal was mainly to write in Hebrew regardless of contents. According to him, they did not write about their own life, thus their writings were shallow and dry. In addition, they did not endeavor to remedy Jewish societal ills. Even those who translated books of science wrote in such a lofty language that the masses could not understand what they wrote. Lack of criticism and the yet to emerge novels were the early Haskalah's drawback.

It is in Kovner that we notice the change of the horizon of expectations. He was highly critical of Wessely's *Shirei Tiferet*, which according to him, imitated a trend in world literature for such writing; however, there was no need for that because the original Bible itself is a supreme work of literary creativity. He asserted that one verse of the Song of Moses in Exodus excels more than the whole of *Shirei Tiferet*.

¹⁴⁷ Avraham Uri Kovner, "Davar El Sofrei Israel" [A Word to the Authors of Israel], *Hamelitz* [The Advocate, Mediator], XVI (29th of Nisan, 1864), column 251.

¹⁴⁸ *Idem, Heker Davar* [Probing a Matter] (Warsaw, 1866), pp. 38–39.

Kovner argued that one major idea permeates throughout Wessely's epic and it is the praise of God and his greatness, but this "we know from the biblical books themselves."¹⁴⁹

All the glorified praises of Wessely's epic by past Haskalah generations were wiped out at once. It was a major revision of literary conventions that affected the reception of Wessely's poetry.

Another critic, Avraham Papirna, too, was very critical of Wessely's epos, representing a revision in literary assessment. He argued that *Shirei Tiferet* is essentially "commentaries on the verses of Exodus rather than 'songs of glory.'"¹⁵⁰ Like Kovner, Papirna criticized Wessely for imitating Homer and Virgil, and medieval poets. His criticism is rather ambivalent as concurrently he acknowledged Wessely as "one of the respectable and true poets" who had greatly influenced Haskalah authors such as Shalom Hacohen in his *Nir David*.

While this is the beginning of a new trend of criticism, there were still voices within the community of Haskalah writers who expressed their positive attitude toward Wessely and his work. The poet laureate of late Haskalah, Juda Leib Gordon (YaLaG) (1830–1892) valued Wessely as the one who opened the modern secular Hebrew poetry.¹⁵¹ Gordon, in a way, reinstated Wessely to his prime position. Yet, this restoration did not last long, as Ḥayim Nahman Bialik (1873–1934), the national poet at the turn of the century and afterwards, removed the halo around Wessely stating that his poetry was "lukewarm," watery; "not hot nor cold."¹⁵²

The major onslaught on the early Haskalah came in the 1870s and 1880s in the writing of a major Maskil, Peretz Smolenskin, the influential editor of *Hashahar* (Dawn). His general assessment of the early Haskalah from a literary point of view was rather negative, stating that the group of writers around the circle of *Hame'asef* "filled their books with empty and dry stuff which contained no knowledge or spirit."¹⁵³ He dismissed their writings as children's stuff, and totally ridiculed their lofty language, the *melitzah*, and their choice of subjects, such as description of spring. Consequently, it is a change of view of literature that rejects romanticism

¹⁴⁹ *Idem*, "Pirhei Hamelitz (Lishnat 1866)" [The Flowers of *Hamelitz* for the Year 1866], *Tzeror Perahim* [Bouquet of Floweres] (Odessa, 1868), p. 50 (the whole article: pp. 16–92).

¹⁵⁰ Avraham Papira, *Kankan Hadash Male Yashan* [A New Jar Filled with Old] (Vilna, 1867; facsimile edition: Tel Aviv, 1969), p. 63.

¹⁵¹ Juda Leib Gordon, "Dvar Yom Beyomo" [Daily Matter], *Kitvei Yedudah Leib Gordon* [The Writings of Y. L. G.], Prose, II (Tel Aviv, 1960), p. 341. YaLaG's diary was written in 1892, the last year of his life.

¹⁵² Ḥayim Nahman Bialik, "Shiratenu Hahadashah" [Our New Poetry], *Kol Kitvei H. N. Bialik* [The Complete Writings of H. N. B.] (Tel Aviv, 1962), p. 256.

¹⁵³ Peretz Smolenskin, "Et Lata'at" [Time to Plant], *Ma'amarim* [Articles], II (Jerusalem, 1925), p. 153. The article, part II, was published first in 1877.

and sublime language. In addition, Smolenskin waged an all out war against Mendelssohn and his philosophy, accusing him of being responsible for the assimilation that inflicted German Jewry.¹⁵⁴ Other writers' criticism of early Haskalah is discussed at the end of chapter three.

A more extreme position was expressed by Mordechai Ehrenpreis (1869–1961), who voiced the view of a group of young, rebelling writers. He dismissed Haskalah as non-literature, with the intention to erect a barrier between it and the newly established Hebrew literature at the turn of the century which is referred to as *Hamahalach Hehadash* (The New Direction).¹⁵⁵

It is here that the change in horizon of expectation occurred. The literary taste changed as well as the orientation of late Haskalah, which now viewed and criticized the religious, cultural and social aftermath developed on the heels of the early Haskalah.

¹⁵⁴ *Idem, Ma'amarim* [Articles], III (Jerusalem, 1926), pp. 10, 39, 231, *et passim*.

¹⁵⁵ Mordechai Ehrenpreis, “Le'an?” [Whither?], *Hashilo'ah*, I (1897), pp. 489–503; republished in Mordechai Ehrenpreis, *Le'an?* [Whither?], Avner Holtzman, ed. (Jerusalem, 1998), pp. 105–133.

CHAPTER THREE: EUCHEL'S RECEPTION THROUGHOUT THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY HASKALAH

הפללה ראות אותי רועה בשדה המדע ?

"Did you imagine seeing me
leading in the field of knowledge?"

(Euchel's letter to Joel Brill in the introduction
to the biography of Mendelssohn)

The commemoration of the 250th anniversary of Isaac Euchel's birth (1756–1804) serves as a proper occasion to revisit this Haskalah author and his contribution to the revival of Hebrew letters. Euchel was the initiator of the Haskalah movement in Germany in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, a founding editor of *Hame'asef*, and a leading figure in the group of Maskilim.¹

Already in the 1970s, I pointed out Isaac Euchel's importance in the annals of the Haskalah, a notion which has been adopted afterwards by other Haskalah scholars who continued to explore his life and work. At this stage of Haskalah research, there is no doubt about Euchel's unique place and pivotal role in the Hebrew and Jewish Haskalah.²

¹ This essay was presented in its initial form as a paper at the special conference commemorating the 250th anniversary of Euchel's birth (1756–1804), sponsored by the Institut für Jüdische Studien der Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf, Zentrum für Jüdische Studien der Universität Potsdam, and Dem Forschungszentrum Europäische Aufklärung Potsdam, held at the University of Potsdam, Germany, October 16–18, 2006.

² Moshe Pelli, *The Age of Haskalah* (Leiden, 1979; revised edition: Lanham, 2006), ch. 10; on Euchel, see Andreas Kennecke, *Isaac Euchel. Architekt der Haskala* (Göttingen, 2007); *Isaak Euchel, Vom Nutzen der Aufklärung. Schriften zur Haskala*, Andreas Kennecke, ed. (Düsseldorf, 2001).

An intriguing question that has yet to be addressed is how Euchel got this recognition, and what was the process of his reception in the nineteenth century. Namely, what was his impact during the time that the Haskalah evolved in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, in Italy and Galicia, and then in Russia, Poland, and Lithuania?

Following chapter two that discusses the reception of the early German Hebrew Haskalah in the nineteenth century, this chapter explores the reception of Euchel as the main figure of the early Haskalah.

To study the reception of an individual writer and, for that matter, the reception of literature or a literary movement, several criteria of reception should be used as guidelines. As delineated in the previous chapter, it involves locating, studying, and analyzing the following:

- Firstly, the availability of a given writer's work by searching for reprints or new editions of books and articles by that writer whose work was published by later Maskilim in the nineteenth century;
- published biographies of the writer;
- memoirs of nineteenth-century Maskilim in which the impact of that writer on their intellectual development is discussed;
- discussions on the writer's life, work, and contribution to the development of Haskalah;
- the inclusion of the writer and his work in respective literary histories and surveys of Haskalah literature;
- the reception and acceptance of the writer's ideology and ideas; and
- the literary reception of a writer's style and literary art, including their acceptance or rejection.

A theory of reception, such as the one proposed by Hans Robert Jauss, was discussed in chapter two.³

Three Main Categories of Citing Euchel

Applying these criteria to the study of Euchel's reception in nineteenth-century writings under study, it is my conclusion that Euchel was cited mostly for his contributions in three main categories:

- as the editor of and contributing writer to *Hame'asef*;
- as a commentator and translator of a biblical book and the prayer book;
- as a biographer.

Of course, there are references that blend into more than one category or which highlight a number of additional aspects of Euchel's work. Citations of Euchel and his work abound in the nineteenth century and are

³ Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception, Theory and History of Literature*, II (Minneapolis, 1982), pp. 3–45. See chapter two.

indicative of his reception and acceptance as one of the founding fathers of early Haskalah.

Republication of Euchel's Work in *Bikurei Ha'itim*

The number of Euchel's works that were reprinted and republished in the nineteenth century is quite impressive.

An early example of evidence regarding the impact of Euchel's and his colleagues' works in the German Haskalah can be found in the republication of articles from *Hame'asef* in *Bikurei Ha'itim*. Published in Vienna from 1820 to 1831, this journal represents the second phase of the Haskalah in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, as discussed in chapter seven.

To put it in perspective, from a total number of 1,916 entries in *Bikurei Ha'itim*, no less than 207 of them were 'recycled' from the first four volumes of *Hame'asef* under Euchel's editorship. Among these were several of Euchel's own articles. For example, *Nahal Habesor* (The Brook 'Besor,' or Good Tidings), the pivotal prospectus of *Hame'asef* that was reprinted in *Bikurei Ha'itim*. It delineated the contents and the mission of the journal and spelled out the Maskilim's program as they established the Hebrew press and founded the Society of the Seekers of Hebrew Language (*Hevrat Dorshei Leshon Ever*). It also highlighted Euchel's vital role therein in establishing the foundation of early Haskalah, and printed his letter soliciting advice from Naphtali Herz Wessely (1725–1805), the personification of the Haskalah in the eyes of the Maskilim, and Wessely's reply.⁴

Another important reprint which exemplified Euchel's role as a spokesman of the Haskalah was his programmatic article in the first volume of *Hame'asef* on the need to learn and understand ancient history. This article illustrated Euchel's wide range of interests as he began to explore the definition of biography and its relation to history, an interest which he later developed further as a biographer. In effect, the article became a powerful call for free and open scholarly and scientific pursuits, arguing that such a probe contradicts neither the essence nor the spirit of Judaism.⁵

Bikurei Ha'itim reprinted a variety of other important articles by Euchel from *Hame'asef*. Among them were articles pertaining to the acrimonious controversy of the early burial of the dead, in which Euchel advocated the position of the Haskalah. Another controversial article by Euchel rejected

⁴ Isaac Euchel, et al., *Nahal Habesor* [The Brook 'Besor,' or Good Tidings] prospectus of *Hame'asef*, in: *Hame'asef*, I (1783/4) (bound with vol. I), pp. 1–15 (separate pagination).

⁵ [Euchel], "Davar el Hakore Mito'elet Divrei Hayamim Hakadmonim" [A Word to the Reader about the Benefit of Ancient History]; foreword to the section "History of the Greatest Sages of Israel," *Hame'asef*, I (1783/4), pp. 9–14.

some of the *piyutim*, the medieval liturgical poems. Here, he followed Maimonides and was in line with the position of many Maskilim.⁶

Bikurei Ha'itim also gave prominent attention to Euchel's creative writings by republishing his epistolary travelogue ("Igrot Yitzhak Eichel") and translating into German an adapted version of his biography of Isaac Abravanel. While arguably the republication of early material from *Hame'asef* may indicate a lack of publishable material on the editors' desks, there is sufficient evidence that a real demand existed for reprints of the works of earlier Maskilim. In highlighting the reprints of Euchel's work, it should be noted that the editors of *Bikurei Ha'itim* republished almost everything that was printed in *Hame'asef* with some exceptions. Thus, they did not exclusively select Euchel's articles for republication.⁷

Republication of Scriptures: Euchel as a Commentator and Translator

The reception and perception of Euchel as a commentator and translator of the Book of Proverbs — the second category of his acceptance — is prevalent in the literature of the nineteenth century. This is not surprising, for in his introduction to Proverbs, initially published in Berlin in 1790, Euchel delineated his theories on the poetics of proverbs and the aesthetics of poetry, and was thus considered one of the literary theoreticians of the early Haskalah.

Evidently, Euchel's translation and commentary of Proverbs was quite popular. In the thirty years following its first publication, it was republished in at least five different and separate editions and, additionally, was included in several editions of the whole Tanach.⁸ However, this does not distinguish

⁶ Itzik Euchel, "Davar el Hamedabrim" [A Word to the 'Medabrim'], *Hame'asef*, III (1786), pp. 205–210. Euchel's notes that he did not present any innovations in his criticism, but rather, as Maimonides himself wrote, argues against certain *piyutim* that some notions of heresy were found in them (pp. 106–107). Euchel apologizes and writes that he did not intend to mock the *piyutim* and deride those who say them and that he did not come to change the "custom of Israel." Nonetheless, he subsequently issues a demand "to seat wise and God-fearing men to supervise on matter of the prayers" (p. 108). The Maskilim had a special interest to update the prayer book and to make it available for all through translation into German.

⁷ Regarding *Bikurei Ha'itim*, cf. Pelli, *Bikurei Ha'itim — Bikurei Hahaskalah* [*Bikurei Ha'itim* — The 'First Fruits' of Haskalah: An Annotated Index to *Bikurei Ha'itim*, the Hebrew Journal of the Haskalah in Galicia (1820–1831)] (Jerusalem, 2005), pp. 45, 51–52, 54, 66, 70, *et seq.*

⁸ Itzik Euchel, *Mishlei* [Proverbs] (Berlin, 1790); (Dessau, 1804); (Offenbach, 1805, 1826); (Vienna, 1817); (Fürth, 1817), and *Kitvei Hakodesh* [Holy Scriptures] (Vienna, 1817).

Euchel's works from those of other Maskilim. As discussed in chapter two, translations and commentaries of, and introductions to, biblical books by Maskilim, among them Aaron Wolfsohn (1754–1835), Joel Brill (1762–1802), and Juda Leib Ben Zeev (1764–1811), were also republished in many editions during the nineteenth century. The reprinting of such works demonstrated the contribution of the earlier Haskalah to biblical scholarship and their place in the proverbial 'Jewish book shelf.' It seems that their editions of the Bible were popular among aspiring Maskilim who wished both to identify with moderate Haskalah and yet adhere to traditional Judaism.

The view of Euchel as a commentator of Proverbs was an established notion in the nineteenth century. His work was cited and discussed by later maskilic commentators. For example, Isachar Beer Schlesinger (1773–1836), a Bohemian teacher, writer, and editor of *Bikurei Ha'itim*, cited in 1827 Euchel's definition of הידח (*Hidah, Hidud*, wit) as an authoritative source in his introduction to his own translation and commentary of Proverbs.⁹

At times, later Maskilim disagreed with Euchel's translation. Among them, Schlesinger rejected Euchel's translation of Proverbs 15:26 and suggested instead another translation.¹⁰ In 1829, Juda Jeiteles (1773–1838), a Prague Maskil and another editor of *Bikurei Ha'itim*, corrected the translation of the prayer *Magen Avot* in Euchel's and David Friedländer's Siddur.¹¹ Nevertheless, Euchel's stature as a biblical scholar and a contributor to the follow up of a major enterprise of the German Haskalah, namely the *Be'ur*, was generally accepted in the nineteenth century.

Republication of Euchel's Biography of Mendelssohn: Its Use as an Historical Source

One of Euchel's major achievements and, in effect, most lasting contribution is his biography of Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786). Because of its subject matter, this first semi-modern biography of early Haskalah achieved a

⁹ Isachar [Bernhard] Beer Schlesinger, "Avnei Kela" [Slingstones] (definitions of witticism, riddle, epigram), *Bikurei Ha'itim*, VIII (1827/8), pp. 36–37.

¹⁰ Schlesinger, "To'evat Hashem Mahshevot Ro'a Utehorim Imrei-No'am" (commentary of verse in Proverbs 15:26), *Bikurei Ha'itim*, X (1829/30), p. 58. Schlesinger issued his own commentary on the book of Mishlei with a translation into German in Prague in 1832; see G. Kressel, *Lexicon Hasifrut Ha'ivrit* [Cyclopedia of Modern Hebrew Literature], II (Merhavyah, 1965), p. 941.

¹¹ Juda ben Jona Jeiteles, "[Rebuke]," correction of the translation of the prayer "Me'ein Haberachot," *Bikurei Ha'itim*, IX (1828/9), pp. 42–43. *Magen Avot* is included in the Friday night service.

canonical prominence after its publication in 1789 and it was republished in three subsequent editions.¹² The biography of Mendelssohn was first serialized in *Hame'asef* and then published in book form at the Maskilim's press in Berlin. It circulated widely among the Maskilim and often was the only source for young, non-German speaking Maskilim in their pursuits of learning about Mendelssohn's admired personality, his role in the Haskalah, and his interpretation of Judaism. It was cited by many Maskilim throughout the nineteenth century.

One such reference appeared in an assessment of Mendelssohn based on Euchel's biography by the leading Russian Maskil, Isaac Baer Levinsohn. In order to signify Mendelssohn's uniqueness, Levinsohn cited the well-known phrase that appears on the little page of the book: “יקר בדורו” “יחיד בעמו” (*Yakar bedoro yahid be'amo* — Precious in his generation, unique among his people).¹³ Similarly, the Vilna writer and editor, Shmuel Yoseph Fuenn (1818–1890), cited Euchel and his biography as source of information about Mendelssohn.¹⁴ Mordechai Aharon Günzburg (1795–1846) also mentioned Euchel's biography of Mendelssohn as a well-known classic in his autobiography *Aviezer*.¹⁵

Euchel's first-hand portrayal of Mendelssohn and his interpretation of Mendelssohn's stance on Judaism was seen by the Italian Maskil Yitzḥak Shmuel Reggio (1784–1855) as proof of Mendelssohn's adherence to traditional Judaism. Reggio disputed the radical interpretation of Mendelssohn's position by his so-called students, arguing instead that they misrepresented their mentor and teacher and actually falsified his teachings.

Reggio came to the defense of Mendelssohn in 1828 in his *Hatorah Vehaphilosiphiah* (Torah and Philosophy).¹⁶ Six years later, he continued

¹² Euchel, “Toldot Rabenu Moshe Ben Menahem” [The Life Story of Our Rabbi M. B. M. — Biography of Moses Mendelssohn], *Hame'asef*, IV (1788), pp. 113–144, 177–208, 337–368, and *Hame'asef*, V (1789), pp. 33–64; subsequent editions published as books: *Toldot Rabenu Heḥacham Moshe Ben Menahem* [The Life Story of Our Rabbi the Sage M. B. M.] (Berlin, 1789); *Toldot Harav Hakolel Heḥacham Haḥoker Elohi Rabenu Moshe Ben Menahem* [Life Story of the Perfect Rabbi, the Sage, Scholar in Divine Matters, Our Rabbi M. B. M.] (Vienna, 1814); *Toldot Heḥacham Haḥoker Elohi Rabenu Moshe Ben Menahem* [The Life Story of the Sage, Scholar in Divine Matters, Our Rabbi M. B. M.] in: *Zmirot Israel* [Hymns of Israel] (Lemberg, 1860).

¹³ Isaac Baer Levinsohn, *Te'udah Beyisrael* [Testimony in Israel] (Vilna, 1828; facsimile edition: Jerusalem, 1977), p. 151; Shimshon Bloch also cited the biography of Moses Mendelssohn, in *Kerem Ḥemed*, II (1836), letter 8, p. 85.

¹⁴ Shmuel Yoseph Fuenn, *Safah Lene'emanim* [Language for Trusty Men] (Vilna, 1881), pp. 91–92.

¹⁵ Mordechai Aharon Günzburg, *Aviezer* (Vilna, 1864), introduction.

¹⁶ Yitzḥak Shmuel Reggio, *Hatorah Vehaphilosiphiah* [Torah and Philosophy] (Vienna, 1827); *Kerem Ḥemed*, I (1833), letter 24, pp. 87–89.

his argument for his interpretation of Mendelssohn in a long footnote in his edition of Eliyahu Delmedigo's *Behinat Hadat* (Probing Religion).¹⁷ Here, Reggio relied on Euchel's biography and the selected excerpts from Mendelssohn's *Jerusalem* translated into Hebrew that Euchel included in it. Reggio argued that Mendelssohn's student Reb Itzik Eichel could not possibly have misunderstood Mendelssohn's unambiguous, clear, and self-evident statement about the *mitzvot*, the religious precepts, which he cited, namely that "the *mitzvot* which are practiced in all places are considered sacred for you the seeds of Israel." Reggio then asked in a rhetorical manner: "Is it not clear what our rabbi has written?"

Euchel's personal testimony thus became a historic document, one that was accepted by Reggio, a follower of Mendelssohn, whom he considered both a moderate Maskil and an adherent to traditional Judaism.

The Impact of Euchel's Biography and Work In Memoirs of Later Maskilim

The impact of Euchel's biography of Mendelssohn can be further established by studying memoirs written by later Maskilim. While reminiscing on his youth in his 1881 memoirs, the prolific writer and editor of the Galician and Russian Haskalah, Abraham Baer Gottlober (1811–1899), described how he became a Maskil. He related how, upon receiving the biography of Mendelssohn, he read it from morning till evening without interruption. He further attested to Euchel's artistic portrayal by noting that the descriptions found in his biography were so vivid that he could visualize in his mind's eyes everything that happened to Mendelssohn as described in the book.

As previously mentioned, an important aspect of Euchel's biography was his rendering of parts of Mendelssohn's *Jerusalem* into Hebrew. Many of the young Maskilim, who, during their initiation into the Haskalah, could not read German, resorted to this source alone for Mendelssohn's views and concepts of Judaism, since Mendelssohn's *Jerusalem* was translated into Hebrew in 1867.

Indeed, this is exactly what the young Gottlober experienced. He noted in his memoirs that, as he read passages from *Jerusalem* in Euchel's biography, he decided to read Mendelssohn's work in the original German. Consequently, he wrote that he aspired to learn both Hebrew and German perfectly so that he could translate the whole work into Hebrew.¹⁸ He actually wrote these memoirs twelve years after he had translated *Jerusalem*

¹⁷ Eliyahu Delmedigo, *Behinat Hadat* [Probing Religion] (Vienna, 1833), p. 126.

¹⁸ Abraham Baer Gottlober, *Zichronot Mimei Ne'urai* [Youthful Memoirs], III (Warsaw, 1880/1), pp. 31–32; also printed in *Zichronot Umasa'ot* [Memoirs and Journeys], I, Dorot edition (Jerusalem, 1976), pp. 229–230.

into Hebrew. One wonders whether his projection of this notion onto his childhood is authentic or imagined. This is the kind of question that all students of autobiographies and memoirs face in similar contexts.

A related question arises concerning Gottlober's claim that in his youth he had appreciated Euchel's biography and the translation of excerpts from *Jerusalem*. Yet, in Gottlober's own translation of *Jerusalem* written prior to his memoirs, he wrote (in a footnote) that he had read the biography and the excerpts from *Jerusalem* in his childhood. However, he asserted, at that time that Euchel had failed as a translator because instead of quoting Mendelssohn verbatim, Euchel had integrated Mendelssohn's words into the biography of the Jewish philosopher as part of his own narrative.¹⁹

The reliability of such claims is questionable. Regardless of their validity, though, Gottlober clearly considered Euchel and his biography of Mendelssohn as important topics for his memoirs.

A different question arises concerning Gottlober's views of Euchel's biblical translation and commentary. Gottlober reported that, although he studied the Book of Psalms with Mendelssohn's German translation in his youth, he had great difficulties understanding the German. Then, he wrote, "my eyes lit up especially from R[eb] Itzik Eichel's commentary."²⁰ While this is definitely complimentary to Euchel, it seems that Gottlober erred, because it was actually Joel Brill who wrote the commentary on Psalms. At any rate, Euchel was very much on Gottlober's mind.

Meir Halevi Letteris' Biography of Euchel: Euchel As a Major Figure in the Haskalah

The perception of Euchel as a major figure of the Haskalah emerged in the mid-nineteenth century in the writings of Meir Halevi Letteris (1800–1871), a prolific Galician writer and editor. Letteris was very much involved in exploring the enterprises of the first Maskilim, especially their major literary product — *Hame'asef* — and with the image of its editor, Euchel. Being an editor himself, Letteris took it upon himself to republish a new edition of the periodical, but he was only able to issue the first volume of 1783/4.

¹⁹ Moses Mendelssohn, *Sefer Yerushalayim* [Jerusalem], Abraham Baer Gottlober, trans. (Zhitomir, 1867), p. xxii, in a note. It was translated later by "Shoher Tov Leyisrael" [Seeker of Goodness for Israel = Vladimir Fiodorov (Zvi Greenbaum)], and published in Vienna in 1876 by Peretz Smolenskin (*Bet Eked Sefarim*, II, p. 444, no. 941; Klausner, *Historiah Shel Hasifrut Ha'ivrit Hahadashah*, I, p. 85, n. 2; also listed in the catalogue of the Jewish National and University Library), and in the twentieth century: Moshe Mendelssohn, *Yerushalayim* (Tel Aviv, 1947).

²⁰ Gottlober, *Zichronot Mimei Ne'urai*, p. 34; *idem*, *Zichronot Umasa'ot*, p. 234.

In conjunction with this new edition of *Hame'asef* in 1862,²¹ Letteris wrote a short biography of Euchel which he published as part of this edition.²²

As seen in chapter two, this category of biographies written about the founding fathers of the Haskalah in Germany serves as an indicator of their reception by representatives of the later Haskalah. In the course of the century, other biographies were published on Mendelssohn (in *Bikurei Ha'itim*, in German), on Wessely, and on other Maskilim.²³

By far, it is Letteris' biography that praised Euchel most. It is obvious that Letteris admired Euchel and what he represented. In fact, it is possible to detect some sort of psychological attachment on the part of Letteris towards the figure of Euchel, who, like himself, was an editor and active in the literary movement of the Haskalah.

Letteris' biography of Euchel is in effect a hagiography. He attributed the appearance of Euchel to the Almighty, as Euchel did with his image of Mendelssohn. Letteris wrote: "One of the remnants [of the people] that God has summoned to help and benefit the people by his deeds while they were walking in the dark in the past generation was the learned author ["*Heḥacham hamelitz*"] whose lips flow with myrrh, Reb Yitzḥak Eichel...."²⁴ Letteris asserted that, with the publication of *Hame'asef*, his masterpiece, Euchel made a name for himself together with his renowned friends and associates for "everlasting glory."²⁵

Letteris' view of Euchel's place in Jewish history can be inferred from his use of the motto from Johann Wolfgang Goethe's *Faust* that opens

²¹ Meir Halevi Letteris, publisher, "El Hakore" [To the Reader], *Hame'asef Lishnat HTKMD* [*Hame'asef* for the Year HTKMD (1783/4)], second edition, (Vienna, 1862), pp. 1–2.

²² Letteris, "Toldot Heḥacham R[abenu] Itzik Eichel Z.L." [The Life of the Sage Our Rabbi I. E. of Blessed Memory], in: *Hame'asef*, 2nd ed., pp. 41–47. This biography was also published in his book *Zikaron Basefer* [Memoir in the Book] (Vienna, 1869), pp. 90–97.

²³ See chapter two. On Mendelssohn, see: anon., "Toldot Rabenu Moshe Ben Menahem" [The Life Story of M. B. M.], a second biography in the section 'Toldot Gedolei Israel' [The Life Story of the Greatest of Israel], *Bikurei Ha'itim*, I (1820/1), pp. 20–26; on Wessely, see: David Friedrichsfeld, *Zecher Tzadik* [Commemoration of a Righteous Man] (Amsterdam, 1809); Yahbik [acronym], "Toldot Rabbi Naphtali" [The Life Story of R. Naphtali], *Hamagid* [The Herald], I (1857), issues 26, 30, 33, 36, 37, 51; *Sefer Divrei Shalom Ve'emet* [The Book of Words of Peace and Truth] (1886), pp. 1–31, Kalman Schulmann's edition; Shlomo Mandelkern, "Toldot Rabbi Naphtali Herz Weisel Z.TZ.L." [The Life Story of R. N. H. W. of Blessed Memory], *Ha'asif* [The Harvest], III (1887), published in Warsaw in 1886, pp. 404–417.

²⁴ Letteris, "Toldot Heḥacham R[abenu] Itzik Eichel Z.L.", p. 41.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

Letteris' biography: "Was glänzt ist für den Augenblick geboren; / Das Aechte [sic!] bleibt der Nachwelt unverloren" ("What glitters is born for the moment; / the truth remains for posterity").²⁶

Based on this biography, it is worthwhile at this point to summarize the attributes which Letteris identified in Euchel:

- His interest in secular studies. Euchel was said to be among the first Maskilim to seek *Hochmot nochriyot*, i.e., foreign disciplines, a scholarly pursuit of non-Judaic subjects, at a university, where he was instructed by the great philosopher Immanuel Kant. In all of Euchel's writings, Letteris adduced, one can detect the impact of Kant's philosophy. Actually, Letteris believed that even Euchel's probe into Judaism was based on the foundations of Kant's thinking.²⁷ In summary, Letteris argued that Euchel loved free investigation,²⁸

- Establishing the society of Maskilim and its journal *Hame'asef*. Letteris considered Euchel's major contributions to be the founding of the Society of the Seekers of Hebrew Language and, for the first time in Jewish history, launching a modern periodical in Hebrew.²⁹ The messages that *Hame'asef* disseminated among the Jews will remain for ever, Letteris wrote, and its memory will not fade until the last generation.³⁰ In a euphuistic style of grandiloquence, he expressed his admiration for Euchel's unique contribution: "As long as the heavens exist upon this earth, it would not cease making fruits in the hearts of the children of Israel, leading them to acquire beneficial knowledge."³¹ Letteris considered the journal a major guide which led the Jews in modern times toward enlightenment;³²

- His literary contribution. As mentioned earlier, Letteris praised Euchel's literary work, including his translation and commentary of Proverbs and biography of Mendelssohn. Emphasizing the latter work's impact on the Maskilim, he wrote that "it kindled a flame in the heart of every knowledge-seeking reader to love wisdom," and that "this little book affected greatly the House of Israel."³³ In addition, Letteris had high praise for Euchel's epistolary story "Igrot Meshulam Ben Uriah Ha'eshtemoi"

²⁶ Cited from Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Faust, Vorspiel auf dem Theater* (Leipzig, 1790), pp. 71–74: "Oft, wenn es erst durch Jahre durchgedrungen, / Erscheint es: in vollendeter Gestalt. / Was glänzt, ist für den Augenblick geboren; / Das Echte bleibt der Nachwelt unverloren."

²⁷ Letteris, "Toldot Heḥacham R[abenu] Itzik Eichel Z.L.," p. 42.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 42 (footnote).

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

³² Letteris, "El Hakore," *Hame'asef Lishnat HTKMD*, 2nd ed., pp. 1–2.

³³ Letteris, "Toldot Heḥacham R[abenu] Itzik Eichel Z.L.," p. 43.

(The Letters of Meshulam Son of Uriah Ha'eshtemoi), saying that it “is more precious than pure gold.”³⁴

Negative attitudes toward Euchel during his own lifetime on the part of some of his traditionalist contemporaries were met by Letteris with dismay. For, while Euchel worked to improve the lot of his people, he was criticized and attacked by those who rejected the Haskalah and its call for modernism.³⁵

In spite of the lofty language that sounds exaggerated to the modern ear, Letteris’ basic perception of Euchel is of a unique individual who founded the Hebrew Haskalah and started some of its major enterprises.

Republication of Literary Materials in Chrestomathies, Catechisms, Primers, and Letter-Writing Guides

Another criterion used to assess the acceptance and reception of Euchel’s work and that of other Maskilim, expounded in a previous chapter, is the inclusion of their material in chrestomathies, catechisms, and primers. Intended primarily for school children, some of the material was used as well by adults who wished to learn Hebrew or read semi-‘canonical’ texts not available elsewhere.

Throughout the nineteenth century, Maskilim — teachers, educators, and writers — ‘recycled’ early materials such as stories, tales, fables, riddles, and similar creative writing in chrestomathies intended for use in Jewish schools. These include Wolfsohn’s textbook *Avtalyon* and Ben Zeev’s primers.³⁶ Euchel’s material was recycled as well. For example, Adam Martinet’s textbook *Tiferet Israel* (Glory of Israel) included Euchel’s letters to his student Michal, the travelogue in epistolary form published initially in *Hame’asef*.³⁷ These letters were deemed to have both pedagogic qualities for educating the young as well as literary value.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Aaron Wolfsohn, *Avtalyon* (Berlin, 1790); (Prague, 1806). Juda Leib Ben Zeev, *Limudei Hamesharim* [Uprighted Studies], vol. 2 of *Bet Hasefer* [School] (Vienna, 1811); (Vienna, 1849). See Uriel Ofek, *Sifrut Hayeladim Ha’ivrit — Hahatḥalah* [Hebrew Children’s Literature: The Beginnings] (Tel Aviv, 1979); Zohar Shavit, “From Friedländer’s Lesebuch to the Jewish Campe. The Beginning of Hebrew Children’s Literature in Germany,” *The Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, XXXIII (1988), pp. 385–415; *Idem*, “Harihit Shel Hadar Hahaskalah Hayehudit Beberlin” [The Furniture in the Jewish Haskalah ‘Heder’ in Berlin], *Studies in Jewish Culture in Honour of Chone Shmeruk*, Israel Bartal, Ezra Mendelsohn, and Chava Turniansky, eds. (Jerusalem, 1993), pp. 193–207.

³⁷ Adam Martinet, *Tiferet Israel* [Glory of Israel] – *Hebräische Chrestomathie der biblischen und neuern Literatur* (Bamberg, 1837), pp. 59–69. Published

Collections of letters and epistolary writings for pedagogic purposes, i.e., letter-writing guides (*Briefsteller*), also serve as a source for examining the reception of Euchel's work. Letters by well-known or less known writers were presented in such collections for the purpose of teaching good letter writing; other letters were 'stock' letters written for various occasions, to be copied and used for personal correspondence.³⁸

One such letter in the category of writers' correspondence was Euchel's desperate letter to Shalom Hacohen (1771–1845) from 1799, in which Hacohen asked Euchel to help in the efforts to revive *Hame'asef*. This significant and quite powerful letter sheds light on the state of the Hebrew Haskalah in Germany at the *fin de siècle*. Moreover, it reveals the depth of Euchel's personal disappointment in not realizing the goals that the Haskalah had set for itself sixteen years earlier.

I have also tasted the dregs of the cup of reeling which came on the people of Judea and its enlighteners. The days of love have passed, gone are the days of the covenant between me [another version: between it — the Hebrew language] and the children of Israel. When the buds of wisdom were seen, and when the Hebrew language has flourished, the young children of Israel came daily to pick out the fruits of its reason. They have run away, and they have gone, Oh! They would not come back. Since they had said in their heart that the earth is full of knowledge, they have detested the language of their fathers, and have thrown it behind their back. They have forgotten me, too, and they have left me alone like a heath in the desert.

Euchel's letter was recycled throughout the century as a historical document, emblematic of the downfall of the German Haskalah. Shalom Hacohen's collection of letters *Ktav Yosher* (Epistle of Righteousness) included both this letter and Euchel's introduction to the book of Mishlei.³⁹ His *Ktav Yosher* was republished 14 times during the nineteenth century.⁴⁰ Letteris, too, published Euchel's letter in his collection of letters from 1868.⁴¹

Other editors of similar anthologies did the same: Fuenn printed part of Euchel's epistolary writing in his 1871 book *Sofrei Israel* (Writers of

first: Itzik Euchel, "Igrot Yitzhak Eichel" [Letters of Yitzhak Eichel], *Hame'asef*, II (1785), pp. 116–121, 137–142.

³⁸ Judith Halevi-Zwick, *Toldot Sifrut Ha'igronim (ha-brivenshtelers) Ha'ivriyim* [The History of the Hebrew Briefsteller Literature] (Tel Aviv, 1990).

³⁹ Shalom Hacohen, *Ktav Yosher* [Epistle of Righteousness] (Vienna, 1820), pp. 95–100.

⁴⁰ Hayim Dov Friedberg, *Bet Eked Sefarim* [Library of Books], II (Tel Aviv, 1952), p. 478, no. 556, reports of 14 editions up to 1871.

⁴¹ Letteris, *Sefer Michtevei Ivrit* [Book of Hebrew Letters] (Vienna, 1868).

Israel), an anthology of letters by classical and Haskalah writers including Mendelssohn, Wessely, and Friedländer.⁴²

As in the case of Euchel's biography of Mendelssohn, his letter to Hacohen was deemed in the nineteenth century to be both a personal testimony and first-hand evidence of the demise of the German Haskalah by one of its founders.

Euchel as an Aesthetician

A further important aspect of the reception of Euchel's work can be obtained by reviewing the perception of Euchel as an expert on aesthetics in the Haskalah of the nineteenth century. His contribution to the poetics theory of the revived Hebrew literature was mentioned by several writers.

As early as 1810, Dov Baer Ginzburg (1776–1811), a Galician poet and contributor to the new *Hame'asef*, cited Euchel's assessment of Wessely's poetics in his epos *Shirei Tiferet* (Songs of Glory) in a review article published in 1790 in *Hame'asef*.⁴³

Ginzburg made his own comments in the introduction to his edition of Moshe Hayim Luzzatto's *Leshon Limudim* (Learned Language),⁴⁴ where he accepted Euchel's definition of Wessely's work as "shir sipuri" (probably: an epic poem). He disagreed, however, with Euchel's definition of secondary stories in Wessely's epos that were deemed to be trivial and of less significance. Euchel called them romances or ballads, while Ginzburg referred to them as lyrical poems, or "Sippur piyuti ktan Ha'erech" (less valuable poetic stories). Whether right or wrong,⁴⁵ Euchel's assessment of Wessely's poetics left its mark on serious discussions about aesthetics and poetics by the later Maskilim.

An indication of Euchel's impact is noticeable as late as 1853. In the introduction to his *Kikayon Leyonah* (Jonah's Gourd), the Amsterdam Maskil Gabriel Polak (1803–1869) expressed his indebtedness to Wessely who has influenced his writings. He then cited Euchel's review, in which

⁴² Fuenn, *Sofrei Israel* [Writers of Israel] (Vilna, 1871), pp. 134–137.

⁴³ A - A [Euchel], "Bikoret Sefer Shirei Tiferet Me'et Naphtali Weisel" [Review of *Shirei Tiferet* by N. Wessely] (Review of modern books, first in a series), *Hame'asef*, VI (1790), pp. 210–221; "Hemshech Bikoret Sefer Shirei Tiferet" [Continuation of Review]; (Review of modern books, second article in a series), *Hame'asef*, VI (1790), pp. 346–352.

⁴⁴ B. G. of Brody [Dov Ginzburg] in his introduction to Moshe Hayim Luzzatto's *Sefer Leshon Limudim* [Book of Learned Language] (Stanisławów, 1810; my edition: Sdilikov, 1826), pp. 1–14.

⁴⁵ Franz Delitzsch, *Zur Geschichte der jüdischen Poësie vom Abschluss der heiligen Schriften Alten Bundes bis auf die neueste Zeit* (Leipzig, 1836), p. 104. Delitzsch defines "Shir Sipuri" as "Romanze," as Euchel had previously defined the term.

Euchel stated that writing such as Wessely's had not been composed in Israel since the exile — a statement which has been repeated numerous times about Wessely.⁴⁶

Historical Summaries and Overviews of Hebrew Literature

Reliable sources of information about the reception of Euchel's work in the nineteenth century are the historical summaries and literary overviews of Hebrew literature that emerged in the 1880s upon the end of the Haskalah period as the need arose for such assessments and summaries.

One such work on the German Haskalah was published in 1881 by the previously mentioned Vilna writer and editor Shmuel Yoseph Fuenn. In his overview of the history of Hebrew, Fuenn cited Euchel as one of the founding editors of *Hame'asef* who signed the prospectus *Nahal Habesor* and referenced Euchel's biography as a source of information on Mendelssohn's ephemeral moral weekly *Kohelet Musar* (Preacher of Morals).⁴⁷ This brief citation did not say much about Euchel, and it seems that he was lost among the great historical figures of Judaism in Fuenn's account.

Fuenn did, however, acknowledge Euchel's contribution to biblical commentaries in a previous article published in 1844. While classifying the main spheres of activity and attributes of various Maskilim, he first identified Mendelssohn as the major source of influence over the other Maskilim. He then referred to Wessely mostly as a poet, to Isaac Satanow as a proverb writer, and to Brill, Euchel, and Ben Zeev as biblical commentators.⁴⁸

A similar source of information is found in Hebrew lexica and encyclopedias of writers published by enterprising editors in the nineteenth century. Fuenn, for one, included an entry on Euchel in his *Knesset Israel* (The Assembly of Israel), a biographical lexicon of "the great persons of Israel known for their scholarship, wisdom and deeds," as it is cited on the title page.⁴⁹ He identified Euchel as "a great pundit [*hacham gadol*] and a wonderful [*nifla*] writer, one of Mendelssohn's disciples." Fuenn also cited Euchel's biography of Mendelssohn and praised his "precious and

⁴⁶ Gabriel Polak, *Kikayon Leyonah* [Jonah's Gourd] (Amsterdam, 1853), p. iii. Polak relies on Euchel's review of *Shirei Tiferet* in *Hame'asef* and cites his article on Wessely's epic work, remarking that "nothing like it has been done since the Israelites were exiled from their land."

⁴⁷ Fuenn, *Safah Lene'emanim*, pp. 91–92, esp. p. 97.

⁴⁸ Fuenn, "Bikoret Sefer Shirei Sefat Kodesh" [Review of Book of Holy Tongue Poems], in: *Pirhei Tzafon* [Northern Flowers], II (1844), pp. 90–103, esp. pp. 92–93.

⁴⁹ Fuenn, *Knesset Israel* [The Assembly of Israel] (Warsaw, 1886), p. 96.

esteemed” commentary of Mishlei. Likewise, he referred to Euchel’s articles in *Hame’asef* as “precious and wonderful in their ideas and beautiful style.” This pundit, Fuenn wrote, “was beloved and respected by the great thinkers of Berlin, Jewish and Christian alike.” In his dedication to the benefit and benevolence for his people, Fuenn noted, Euchel established in 1792 the Society of Friends (Gesellschaft der Freunde).

Fuenn also mentioned Euchel’s translation of the prayer book,⁵⁰ but he was critical of his free translation that did not adhere to the meaning of the words. Nevertheless, he explained that Euchel did so “in order to show the glory of our prayers to the other nations.”

Meir Weissberg: The History of Hebrew Literature

By the turn of the century, and upon the demise of the Haskalah, attempts to write the history of Hebrew literature emerged. One such attempt was made in 1895 by the Galician educator and writer Meir Weissberg (1856–1930) in a series of articles titled “Letoldot Hasifrut Ha’ivrit” (Toward a History of Hebrew Literature).

In this introduction to Hebrew literature, Weissberg explained the demise of German Haskalah by citing Shalom Hacohen’s 1799 letter to Euchel,⁵¹ urging him to revive *Hame’asef* “for the glory of the Hebrew language.” He then quoted several passages from Euchel’s desperate letter that reflected the state of Haskalah at that time.⁵²

Euchel’s assessment of the demise of Haskalah coming from its initiator is deemed a first-hand account that entered the history of modern Hebrew literature.

Eliezer Rosenthal: Bibliographies

Bibliographies are another source of information about Euchel, but they tend to be rather succinct and almost always just factual without assessment or value judgment. However, occasionally, they include some evaluation. For example, in the entry on Euchel’s biography of Mendelssohn in Eliezer Rosenthal’s (1856–1932) *Yode’a Sefer* (Scholar [One Familiar with Books]) the author praised Euchel primarily for his style and the beauty of his language.⁵³ Among the works of other bibliographers of the time, Moritz

⁵⁰ Euchel, *Gebete der hochdeutschen und polnischen Juden*, (Königsberg, 1786).

⁵¹ See note 39 above and the quotation from Euchel’s letter.

⁵² Meir Weissberg, “Letoldot Hasifrut Ha’ivrit” [Toward a History of Hebrew Literature], *Mimizrah Umima’arav* [From East and from West], I, No. 2 (1895), p. 40.

⁵³ Eliezer Rosenthal, *Yode’a Sefer* [Scholar (One Familiar with Books)] (Amsterdam, 1875; 1972); vol. 2 of Meir Roest, *Catalog der Hebraica und*

Steinschneider (1816–1907) listed Euchel's book and articles but gave no assessment of them.⁵⁴

Evaluation of Euchel's Contribution To the Development of the Haskalah

In order to study Euchel's place in the literary consciousness of his counterparts in the later Haskalah, it is important to review evaluative statements about him and his work by other writers.

Several writers acknowledged their indebtedness to early authors of the German Haskalah, and while this could be construed as self-serving, it is nevertheless indicative of the role that German Haskalah writers played in the later Haskalah and the esteem they had accorded by their followers.

As early as 1794, when he was still active, Euchel was regarded as “the perfect one [*Hashalem*]” by the poet and playwright Joseph Ha’efrati of Troplowitz (1770–1804) in the introduction to his biblical drama *Meluchat Sha’ul* (Saul’s Reign). This author credited Euchel and Wessely (whom he cited in the same context as “the great and famous poet”) as the originators of the idea that poetry and the creative expression of lofty matters are essential to the perception of God and to worship Him.⁵⁵

Another writer who attempted to write the history of Hebrew literature and who evaluated various Haskalah writers quite early in the nineteenth century was Moses Mendelssohn-Frankfurt (1782–1861), also known as the ‘second Mendelssohn.’ In his book *Pnei Tevel* (Face of the World), written in the 1820s but published in 1872, he praised Euchel as a “wonderful man, with his awesome mastery of the Hebrew language, as it is shown in his biography of Moses Mendelssohn, which depicts the life story, essence, and qualities [“*Toldot umishpat umidot*”] of the man Moshe, as if he stood alive in front of the reader.”⁵⁶

This kind of assessment of Euchel’s quality of writing was mentioned also by other writers.

Judaica aus der L. Rosenthal'schen Bibliothek, I (Amsterdam, 1785; 1966), p. 440.

⁵⁴ M. Steinschneider, *Catalogus Librorum Hebraeorum in Bibliotheca Bodleiana*, II (Berlin, 1931), pp. 974–975.

⁵⁵ Joseph Ha’efrati, *Meluchat Sha’ul* [Saul’s Reign] (Vienna, 1794), p. 21, introduction (my pagination).

⁵⁶ Moshe Mendelssohn-Frankfurt, *Pnei Tevel* [Face of the World] (Amsterdam, 1872), p. 252.

Shalom Yaakov Abramovich: In Defense of Early Haskalah

In the 1870s, the early German Maskilim and their writings were the focus of acrimonious criticism by later Maskilim, among them, in 1864, Avraham Uri Kovner (1842–1909) and Peretz Smolenskin (1842–1885), beginning in 1873. As we have seen in chapter two, these critics had harsh assessments of the quality of the early Maskilim's writings and their Enlightenment ideology. Smolenskin accused Mendelssohn and his followers of causing the great waves of conversion to Christianity among German Jews and of neglecting to adhere to the essence of Judaism.

Confronting this criticism, some contemporary Maskilim came to the defense of the German Haskalah. In contrast to Smolenskin, the writer Shalom Yaakov Abramovich (1836?–1917) (later known by his pseudonym Mendele Mocher Sefarim — Mendele the Bookseller) had a very positive attitude toward the early Maskilim and expressed his gratitude to them. In 1873, he wrote that “the generation of Mendelssohn and his associates” adhered to the ancient national spirit of the people and did not deviate from this path.⁵⁷ Among the Maskilim who worked to cultivate the Hebrew language, Abramovich cited Wessely and Euchel together with Brill and Satanow. Abramovich seemingly valued the work of the early Maskilim so much that he called on his contemporaries to follow in the footsteps of the members of the early society of Hebraists in Berlin — the Society of the Seekers of Hebrew Language (*Hevrat Dorshai Leshon Ever*), which later took on the name Society for the Promotion of Goodness and Virtue (or, Resourcefulness) (*Shoharei Hatov Vehatushiyah*). For him, this association of Maskilim should serve as an emblem of positive Haskalah and should be emulated.⁵⁸

Abramovich also praised the contribution of *Hame'asef* in promoting creative writings in Hebrew, and paid tribute to its writers, whom he stated would “shine as stars forever in the history of the people of the God of Abraham.”

Thus, Abramovich was completely supportive of the German Haskalah, and he perceived Euchel to be one of the ‘founding fathers’ of the Haskalah.

Elazar Shulman: Euchel Caused More Harm than Good

In the 1870s, even more criticism was waged against the early Maskilim. The Russian Maskil Elazar Shulman (1837–1904) was very critical of this group of Maskilim, among them David Friedländer, Isaac Satanow, and

⁵⁷ Shalom Yaakov Abramovich, “Et Ledaber” [Time to Talk], introduction to *Toldot Hateva* [The Story of Nature], III (Vilna, 1873), pp. viii–xxv, esp. p. xxv.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. xxiv.

Herz Homberg, and their orientation after Mendelssohn's death. In a biographical study of German luminaries of Jewish origin published in 1893, he mentioned Euchel as "the chosen among them" (namely, the early Maskilim; one, of course, does not know whether he was ironic here), writing that, in spite of his great work for Hebrew literature and the "goodness and benevolence" that he bestowed upon it by his literary contribution, he caused more harm than good through his extreme zeal for Haskalah in the eyes of those who still adhered to tradition.⁵⁹ In a footnote, he cited an anecdote told by Ludwig Geiger about a skirmish with Wessely at Mendelssohn's home in which Wessely rebuked Euchel about his loose ways. In contrast, Wessely's letter in support of Euchel and his proposed journal, published in *Nahal Habesor*,⁶⁰ demonstrated a positive attitude toward Euchel. Shulman subsequently cited Euchel's contributions to Hebrew literature, i.e., his articles in, and his efforts for, *Hame'asef*, his biography of Mendelssohn, and his translation and commentary of Proverbs.

Shulman's traditional position may explain his rejection of Euchel on the grounds of Geiger's anecdote and his branding of Euchel as have done harm to the cause of Haskalah. This notion of Euchel was perpetuated later in the twentieth century, as illustrated by the criticism of Simon Bernfeld and others, who considered Euchel to be a radical Maskil (from a religious point of view).⁶¹ Nevertheless, Euchel's contributions are acknowledged as well.

Juda Leib Kantor: Critical of the Haskalah

In the 1880s and 1890s, there were additional waves of criticism against the Haskalah concurrent with its apparent demise.

Juda Leib Kantor (1849–1915), an editor and writer in Russia and elsewhere, wrote a seminal article in 1886 titled "Dor Hame'asfim" (The Generation of the Me'asfim) on the circle of writers surrounding *Hame'asef*, in which he assessed the early German Haskalah in general.⁶² As he remarked in a footnote, he followed the views of Heinrich Graetz in his

⁵⁹ Elazar Shulman, *Mimekor Israel*, [II] [From the Source of Israel] (Berditshov, 1893), p. 23. The first part of the book was published in *Hashahar* in 1876.

⁶⁰ Euchel, correspondence with Wessely in *Nahal Habesor*.

⁶¹ Simon Bernfeld, *Dor Tahapuchot* [A Froward Generation], I (Warsaw, 1914), p. 79. He writes that Euchel ate non-Kosher food.

⁶² Juda Leib Kantor, "Dor Hame'asfim" [The Generation of the Me'asfim], *Ha'asif* [The Harvest] (Warsaw, 1887), pp. 1–34. Kantor notes that he basically followed Graetz in his article but deviated from him in matters which, in his opinion, were incorrect, p. 1; cf. Heinrich Graetz, *Divrei Yemei Hayehudim* [History of the Jews], IX, Yoseph Eliyahu Trivush, trans. (Warsaw, 1904), ch. 4, pp. 86–115.

history of the Jewish people, which he also translated into Hebrew. Thus, like Graetz, he argued for Mendelssohn's unique role in the Haskalah, yet claimed that Mendelssohn's followers were mediocre. Among the Maskilim, he mentioned Euchel as having learned to write "clear and simple Hebrew" from his "teachers Mendelssohn and Wessely."⁶³

While asserting that "Nature bestowed upon [Euchel] only a fast pen," Kantor argued that this "deprived him of an imaginative spirit and creative vision." The assessment is not complimentary, and, in it, he followed Graetz, who wrote that Euchel's style was "pleasant" when compared to the style used before his time, but rather "dry" and lacking "the power of imagination and the talent of creativity."⁶⁴

Following in Graetz's footsteps as a historian, Kantor ignored Euchel's historical role in the early Haskalah and hardly addressed any of Euchel's literary works.

Mordechai Ehrenpreis: Haskalah is Not Literature

Even harsher criticism in the post-Haskalah period can be found in the writings of Mordechai Ehrenpreis (1869–1951), who led a dispute with Ahad Ha'am (Asher Ginsberg) (1856–1927) on the orientation of contemporary Hebrew literature.

Representing the new trends in Hebrew literature, Ehrenpreis lashed out against the Haskalah in an article entitled *Le'an?* ("Whither?") published in 1897.⁶⁵ Clearly, his intention was to create a definite separation between the literature of the Haskalah and the writings of the group known as "the young writers" (*Hatze'irim*) whom he represented.

In this article, Ehrenpreis criticized the literary work of the Me'asfim, stating in effect that whatever they were doing could not be considered literature. He claimed that they were united for a kind of literary activity that lacked any clear and meaningful program. They thus laid the cornerstone for "some kind of literature" which was later called "Haskalah." Yet, in essence, he wrote, it was not only an imperfect and bad literature, but in effect a different type of writers' work that cannot be regarded as literature at all.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, "Dor Hame'asfim," p. 22.

⁶⁴ Graetz, *Divrei Yemei Hayehudim*, IX, p. 88. He writes: "He learned from Ben Mena'hem [Mendelssohn] and from Weisel to write in clear Hebrew and his style was pleasant as compared with the corrupt style used prior to this period. But his style was dry and lacked imagination and creative talent."

⁶⁵ Mordechai Ehrenpreis, "Le'an?" [Whither], *Hashilo'ah*, I (1897), pp. 489–503, esp. pp. 489–490; Ehrenpreis, *Le'an? Masot Sifrutiyot* [Whither? Literary Essays], Dorot Library (Jerusalem, 1998), edited with introduction and notes by Avner Holtzman, pp. 105–133, esp. pp. 106–112; cf. Holtzman's introduction.

The new kind of literature, which he and a group of young writers represented, Ehrenpreis asserted, constituted a struggle against the kind of work by the Me'asfim which is called Haskalah. In contrast, the young writers aspired to achieve the level of what he referred to as "true literature."⁶⁶

Ehrenpreis' tirade against the Me'asfim included the argument that because the Me'asfim were dilettantes, they could not have created a literary movement which could echo the life of the people. Moreover, he accused them of being detached from the cultural milieu of their time. According to Ehrenpreis, they acted neither for the benefit of their public nor toward a dedicated goal, but rather for their own personal gratification. Ehrenpreis referred mainly to the group in general and did not refer to Euchel individually. Instead, he singled out Wessely and rejected his poetry altogether.⁶⁷

Yoseph Eliyahu Trivush: In Defense of Haskalah

In the years after Ehrenpreis' attack on the Haskalah, the tendency was to slight its value. Nonetheless, there were still voices in support of its contribution and pioneering enterprise.

One such defender was the Vilna writer and translator Yoseph Eliyahu Trivush (1855–1940), who at the turn of the century came out to defend the 'honor' of Haskalah. In his view, "every writer should be indebted to the early Maskilim because only through them did we get to where we are."⁶⁸ He argued that the early Maskilim were better equipped in general education and literature than many of his contemporary writers. He then mentioned a number of early Maskilim by name: Wessely, Brill, Ben Zeev, and Euchel. Their writings, he asserted, were simple and innovative, and thus they excelled over most of the writers of his time whose writings are neither new nor simple.

Were it not for them, Trivush wrote, there would be no Hebrew periodicals or daily newspapers in his day. He further argued that even the advent of modern Jewish nationalism should be attributed to the early Maskilim, although they did not call it by that term. Although Trivush did mention Euchel as part of the group, he did not single him out.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 490.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 491–492.

⁶⁸ Trivush, "Bichvod Hahaskalah" [In Honor of the Haskalah], *Ahi'asaf*, VIII (Warsaw, 1900), no pagination.

Summary

The general attitude among some Hebrew writers at the end of the nineteenth century was critical of the Haskalah. Therefore, the deeds and writings of the early Maskilim, and Euchel among them, were deemed of less importance to modern Jewish history and Hebrew literature. Yet, some writers did acknowledge their indebtedness to the pioneering work of the first Maskilim.

This attitude towards early Haskalah prevailed, and with the harsh criticism lodged against it as literature, and the disappointment in the 1880s from the European oriented ideology of Haskalah, the historical breakthrough of early Haskalah was mostly ignored. Some voices, such as Abramovich and Trivush, were still acknowledging the major contribution of early Maskilim, but Euchel's unique role was then buried in oblivion, as were his literary contributions. Giving him some credit or criticizing him for his Hebrew style constitutes a superficial approach to Euchel, the public figure, and his important contributions to Haskalah.

A comprehensive view of Euchel had to wait to the second part of the twentieth century as an intensive and comprehensive study of Euchel emerged.

Incidentals

Finally, Euchel achieved some lighter references in the nineteenth century and some literary citations in the twentieth century. I categorize these as ‘incidentals’ to be explored further.

The first such ‘incidental’ finds the figure of Euchel in anecdotes told about great people of Israel. For example, in 1829, Jeiteles told an anecdote about Euchel in *Bikurei Ha'itim* as part of a series of anecdotes about great personalities, including the rabbis Yehezkel Landau and Jonathan Eybeschütz and Maskilim such as Mendelssohn.

In his anecdote, Jeiteles highlighted Euchel as an expert translator of the Bible. And so it goes: a young fellow brought a commentary that he had written on Jeremiah's Lamentations to “the glorious pundit” (*Hehacham hamefo'ar*) Euchel, seeking his opinion. When he returned, Euchel gave him back his work, accompanied with a scroll. As he opened it, he found freshly-written lamentations over his commentary on the Book of Lamentations.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Jeiteles, “Sihot Ḥachmei Israel Bedorot Hadashot” [Conversations of the Learned of Israel in the New Generations], (anecdotes), *Bikurei Ha'itim*, IX (1829/30), pp. 149–157.

Euchel's Figure in Literature

Interestingly, Euchel's figure played a role in literature, and thus he became a literary persona. In Tuvia Gutman Feder's controversial Dialogue of the Dead titled *Kol Mehazezim* (Voice of the Archers) (written in 1813, but published in 1853 or earlier in 1816), Euchel is featured as one of the protagonists together with Mendelssohn and Wessely.⁷⁰ This satiric piece was written to mock Mendel Lefin's translation of the book of Mishlei into Yiddish.⁷¹ Euchel is depicted as being personally offended by the corrupt translation into allegedly 'bad German.'

In the twentieth century, the Nobel laureate Shmuel Yoseph Agnon featured Euchel in one of his stories. In "Levet Abba" (To Father's Home), Euchel appears and plays an enigmatic role.

The storyteller relates the following: "That time, one of the commentators, Yitzhak Eichel is his name, came and showed me a commentary on a difficult passage at the end of the Book of Joshua or the beginning of Hosea. Eichel's commentary was somewhat questionable [...]." In the meantime, he [Euchel] took a cigarette and asked for a light. The narrator gave him a match and commented that the Maskilim with all their knowledge of grammar did not know to coin the Hebrew word 'Gafrur' for such a wooden match. Eichel said, well "this 'gafrir' does make fire." He pronounced it 'Gafrir.' Then Euchel said: "What is the benefit of this match that was extinguished before it could fulfill its mission." The storyteller remarks: "I wanted to defeat him, but I was defeated." According to an interpretation of the story, Euchel was lamenting, perhaps, the demise of the Haskalah before it could fulfill its mission.⁷²

Itzik Manger has Euchel meet with Juda Leib Ben Zeev in a story and read to him his play Reb Henoch.⁷³

⁷⁰ Tuvia Gutman Feder, *Kol Mehazezim* [Voice of the Archers] (Lemberg, 1853).

⁷¹ See previous note.

⁷² Shmuel Yoseph Agnon, "Levet Abba" [To Father's Home], *Samuch Venireh, Kol Sipurav Shel Shmuel Yoseph Agnon* [All of S. Y. Agnon's Stories] (Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, 1962), pp. 103–105. See an interpretation of this story by Isaac Barzilay, "Kishlona Shel Hashiva Le'avar [Failure to Go Back to the Past], *Hadoar* [Post], XXIII (Nissan 11, 5733), pp. 563–565; see also Mordechai Shalev, "Dyokno Shel Hagibor Kimehaber Besefer Hama'asim" [The Portrait of the Protagonist as an Author in The Book of Deeds], *Haaretz*, September 22, 1968; on the coining of the word "Gafrur" with a citation of this story, see Aharon Bar Adon, *S. Y. Agnon Utehiyat Halashon Ha'ivrit* [Agnon and the Revival of the Hebrew Language] (Jerusalem, 1977), pp. 175–176, 190. Hillel Weiss, in a personal discussion, explained Agnon's use of the word 'Gafrir' as mocking Euchel's Germanic inclination.

⁷³ Itzik Manger, "Itzik Euchel," *Demuyhot Krovot* [Recent Characters] (Merḥavyah, 1941), pp. 19–24.

There also was a ‘late encounter with Itzik Eichel’ in the Israeli newspaper *Ma’ariv*. The bibliographer G. Kressel wrote an open “Letter to Itzik Eichel” in 1961, addressing him directly and giving him credit for being the founder of the Hebrew press.⁷⁴

And finally, in the twenty-first century, Euchel received his due recognition at this conference in his honor.

⁷⁴ G. Kressel, “Michtav Le’itzik Eichel” [A Letter to Itzik Eichel], the literary section of *Maariv* (December 15, 1961).

CHAPTER FOUR: THE RECEPTION OF HERDER IN THE HEBREW HASKALAH

“These are the words of the great
'Hacham' [pundit], scholar and poet Herder,”
Isaac Euchel, *Hame'asef*, VI (1790), p. 346

In a major article reviewing Naphtali Herz Wessely's biblical epos *Shirei Tiferet* (Songs of Glory), in 1790, Isaac Euchel (1756–1804), the editor of *Hame'asef*, cited “the great 'Hacham' [pundit], scholar and poet Herder,” who expressed his hope that a Hebrew poet would take it upon himself to write an epos on the acts of Moses and the exodus.¹

From this quotation by such a central figure in early Haskalah as Euchel — and some other references that will be discussed later — we may conclude that the towering figure of the German *Aufklärung*, Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), was well respected by the Hebrew Maskilim, and that his writings and thought on biblical poetry and aesthetic were known to the early and later Maskilim, and were well received by them.

Nevertheless, we cannot find any translation of Herder's original works, for example, in *Hame'asef* (The Gatherer) (1783–1811). More puzzling perhaps is that, despite the laudatory expressions, we notice some hesitation

¹ A. A. [Isaac Euchel], “Hemshech Bikoret Sefer Shirei Tiferet” [Continuation of Review of the Book ‘Shirei Tiferet,’] *Hame'asef*, VI (1790), p. 346. This chapter was presented in its initial form at an international conference on Johann Gottfried Herder (“Hebrew Poetry and the Jewish National Spirit: Herder's Influence on Central and East-European Judaism”), in Potsdam, Germany, on September 1-4, 2002, sponsored by the Moses Mendelssohn Zentrum of the University of Potsdam and the International Herder-Gesellschaft. A previous version of this paper was printed in *Hebräische Poesie und jüdischer Volksgeist: Die Wirkungsgeschichte von Johann Gottfried Herder im Judentum Mittel- und Osteuropas* (Hildesheim, Zürich and New York, 2003), pp. 107–124.

by several Maskilim to cite this German writer even though the context of their discussion, being biblical poetry, called for it.

An insight into the relation between the German *Aufklärung* and the Hebrew Haskalah may be gained by studying the acceptance of Herder by the early Hebrew Haskalah in Germany at the end of the eighteenth century and later on in the nineteenth century.

This chapter will examine the impact of his theories on the poetics of the Hebrew Bible, excluding his philosophy and theory of history, by studying the Hebrew Haskalah texts in reference to Herder and his work. Some attention will be given to the acceptance of Herder in the Austro-Hungarian Haskalah in the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Translation of Contemporary German Writers in *Hame'asef*

The subject of translations from contemporary literature into Hebrew as found in *Hame'asef* was discussed by several literary historians and critics, among them Joseph Klausner, the historian of Hebrew literature. He posed the question, why didn't the editors of *Hame'asef* publish any of the great German writers of their time, such as Lessing, Herder, Kant, Schiller and Goethe.² Klausner argued that the editors faced major obstacles which they could not overcome. Firstly, they could not bridge the gap that existed between the European Enlightenment and the political and cultural condition of the Jews at that time. Secondly, their use of the Hebrew language, the 'holy tongue,' hindered adequate translation from German. Consequently, he asserted, the tantalizing polarity between the old and the new, as epitomized in the renewal of the Hebrew language, defused their creative energies.

However, Klausner's explanation, while contributing important insights to the understanding of Haskalah literature and its challenges, is not satisfactory. Klausner did not give any explanation about the abundance of other translations in *Hame'asef*. As my Index to the journal has shown,³ the editors of *Hame'asef* did publish over 30 different translations and adaptations by such German writers as Blumauer, Bürger, Dusch, Gellert,

² Joseph Klausner, *Historiah Shel Hasifrut Ha'ivrit Hahadashah* [History of Modern Hebrew Literature], I (Jerusalem, 1960), p. 155. Contrary to Klausner, some of Lessing's epigrams were published in translation in *Hame'asef*. See Moshe Pelli, *Sha'ar Lahaskalah* [Gate to Haskalah], Annotated Index of *Hame'asef*, First Modern Periodical in Hebrew (1783–1811) (Jerusalem, 2000), p. 114.

³ See relevant entries under the authors' names and under translations from German, French, Italian, etc., in Pelli, *Sha'ar Lahaskalah*. The figure 30 translations includes only *belles lettres*.

Gessner, Hagedorn, Haller, Ewald Christian Kleist, Lessing (contrary to Klausner's cited statement above), and Ramler, among others.⁴

In addition, the editors also published several translations and adaptations from other European languages, such as translation from the writings of the Italian poet and dramatist Pietro Metastasio and the English poets John Gay and Oliver Goldsmith.⁵

The enigma is multiplied if we accept the view of one of the scholars of the Haskalah and the *Aufklärung*, Hayim Shoham, that German Haskalah was attempting to model the emerging Hebrew literature on German literature and accomplished this goal by translating German works into Hebrew.⁶

To solve this question, we need to check who were the non-Hebraic writers whose works have been translated into Hebrew by the editors and writers of *Hame'asef*. It seems that all these non-Hebraic writers were, in the main, *not* contemporaries of *Hame'asef*'s writers and editors but represented an earlier generation.⁷ These were established and recognized writers, and most of them were already acknowledged as part of the German literary canon.

An insight into this concept and its support is found in a literary review by Joel Brill (L – e, Löwe) (1762–1802), a prolific Maskil, a future editor of *Hame'asef* and a biblical commentator, on a book by Hirsch Derenburg, *Yoshvei Tevel* (Inhabitants of the World), published in 1789 in *Hame'asef*.⁸ In a harsh criticism against that author, Brill listed great German writers who, according to him, are exemplary in their writings, unlike the Hebrew author under review. The list included Gellert, Rabener, Hagedorn,

⁴ Alois Blumauer (1755–1798), Gottfried August Bürger (1747–1794), Johann Jakob Dusch (1725–1787), Christian Fürchtegott Gellert (1715–1769), Salomon Gessner (1730–1788), Friedrich von Hagedorn (1708–1754), Albrecht von Haller (1708–1777), Ewald Christian von Kleist (1715–1759), Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–1781), Karl Wilhelm Ramler (1725–1798). See also note 9 below.

⁵ Pietro Metastasio (1698–1782), John Gay (1685–1732) and Oliver Goldsmith (1730–1774).

⁶ Hayim Shoham, *Betzel Haskalat Berlin* [Under the Shadow of the Berlin Enlightenment] (Israel, 1996), chap. 3. See also Hayim Shoham, 'Nathan Heḥacham' Bein Bnei Mino ['Nathan the Wise' Among His Kind] (Tel Aviv, 1981), section II.

⁷ See their dates in notes 4 and 5, above.

⁸ L – e [Joel Löwe, Brill], Review of Hirsch Derenburg's *Yoshvei Tevel* [Inhabitants of the World], *Hame'asef*, V (1789), p. 283. The book was published in 1789.

Lichtwer, Lessing, Wieland, Gessner, Weisse, Kleist, Ramler, and some others.⁹

Indeed, Brill listed well-established writers who wrote mostly *belles lettres*, but excluded Herder. This choice of German literati supports the notion presented above about the reason for the editors' selectivity in translating from the corpus of German literature.

In other words, the editors of *Hame'asef* maintained an editorial policy to publish only literary works that were already part of the accepted corpus of the recent 'classical' German literature. One may disagree with their policy; however, it cannot be dismissed as a careless disregard for contemporary literature. This may explain the non-inclusion of translations by contemporary writers, such as Herder. Thus, we cannot accept the notion that the Maskilim were not able to cope with translation difficulties, as suggested by Klausner.

As a matter of fact, Maskilim were eager to express their belief that the Hebrew language is suitable for translation of contemporary European literature. In *Nahal Habesor* (The Brook 'Besor,' or Good Tidings), the prospectus of *Hame'asef*, the editors presented their plans for the journal which included "translations of proper scholarly and ethical matters from the [other] nations for the educated children of Israel."¹⁰ In his letter to Isaac Euchel, the editor of *Hame'asef* who solicited his advice which was published in *Nahal Habesor*, Naphtali Herz Wessely (1725–1805) referred to translations from European poetry as a given, and suggested that Hebrew writers and poets should not cite the names of pagan gods (p. 7).¹¹

Even in the pre-Haskalah period, in Moses Mendelssohn's (1729–1786) ephemeral moral weekly issued in mid century *Kohelet Musar* (Preacher of Morals), the Jewish philosopher attempted to demonstrate the ability to translate contemporary European writings into Hebrew. To prove his point, he translated Edward Young's "Night Thoughts" into Hebrew.¹² Mendelssohn further argued for the capability of Hebrew to express all kinds of feelings in various circumstances (ch. 2).

⁹ Christian Fürchtegott Gellert, Gottlieb Wilhelm Rabener (1714–1771), Hagedorn, Magnus Gottfried Lichtwer (1719–1783), Lessing, Christoph Martin Wieland (1733–1813), Gessner, Christian Felix Weisse (1726–1804), Kleist, Ramler. Full names and dates added to those not listed above in note 4 and 5.

¹⁰ *Nahal Habesor* [The Brook 'Besor,' or Good Tidings], p. 2, bound with *Hame'asef*, I (1783/4).

¹¹ Cited page numbers in parentheses within the text of the chapter refer to the source discussed in that context and cited in a footnote nearby, and so throughout the book.

¹² *Kohelet Musar* [Preacher of Morals] (1750s), chapter vi. "Night Thoughts" was published in 1742.

Similar criticism that the editors of *Hame'asef* were not keeping pace with contemporary German literature, propounded by Meir Gilon in his work on Mendelssohn's *Kohelet Musar*,¹³ should likewise be dismissed for the same reason.

Gideon Toury, in his work on the maskilic translation of Gellert's fables in *Hame'asef*, explained the Maskilim's proclivity toward non-contemporary translations. He argued that at the emergence of Haskalah, "The German *Aufklärung* was at its summit, and it is difficult to imagine a real synchronization between the two."¹⁴ Thus, the editors of *Hame'asef* turned to non-contemporary texts, especially by writers who were accepted in the canon, and achieved a centrality place in the previous period and now were delegated only a marginal position.

Toury offered some insight about the inclination of *Hame'asef* to publish fables, saying that the Maskilim used this short type of writing, namely the fable, as an easy form to exercise their ability to translate from the German. Longer pieces were perhaps more complex.

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However, references to some of the great contemporary minds in German letters were definitely made in early Hebrew Haskalah literature. Among them was Herder. Although not translated into Hebrew, Herder's works were cited by the early Maskilim as an indication of his reception and his importance in the eyes of the leading writers of early Haskalah.

Euchel Attributing Wessely's Book to Herder's Encouragement and Influence

An example is found in Euchel's review, which was cited before. In his assessment of Wessely, Euchel praised him as the Hebrew poet *par excellence*, referring to Wessely's biblical epos as "this exalted work the likeness of which has not been done since Israel has been exiled from its

¹³ Meir Gilon, *Kohelet Musar Lemendelssohn Al Reka Tekufato* [Moses Mendelssohn's *Kohelet Musar* Against the Background of Its Period] (Jerusalem, 1979), pp. 147–148: "Compared to *Kohelet Musar*, *Hame'asef* was an anachronistic phenomenon" (from a literary point of view).

¹⁴ Gideon Toury, "Shimush Muskal Bemashal Maskili [:] Christian F. Gellert Basifrut Ha'ivrit" [A Logical Use of a Maskilic Fable [:] C. F. Gellert in Hebrew Literature], *Nekudot Mifneh Basifrut Ha'ivrit Vezikatan Lamaga'im Im Sifruyot Aherot* [Turning Points in Hebrew Literature and Their Relation to Contacts with Other Literatures] (Tel Aviv, 1992), pp. 75–86. see also his article "An Enlightened Use of Fable: Christian Fürchtegott Gellert in Hebrew Literature," *Under Construction Links for the Site of Literary Theory [:] Essay in Honour of Hendrik van Gorp* (Leuven, 2000), pp. 197–209.

land.”¹⁵ While considering Wessely’s biblical poetry a major achievement in Hebrew letters, Euchel was anxious to show its relation to the creative trends in German literature. He did so by proudly attributing the motivation that prompted Wessely to write his *Shirei Tiferet* to Herder. Curiously, Euchel did not spell out Herder’s name in the text of the article, saying only that it was “one great man among Germany’s pundits who has [expressed his] hope for some time to see a poem on the acts of Moses and the story of the Exodus [written] by a Hebrew poet.”¹⁶

The identity of this German pundit is revealed in a long and prominently displayed footnote appended to the first page of his article. In this note, Euchel explained, “These are the words of the great ‘Hacham,’ scholar and poet Herder in his great book *Vom Geist der ebräischen Poesie*, part two, p. 78, which I shall present to you herewith in his own words, as follows.” Euchel then went on to quote extensively from Herder’s book (using, as was the practice, German in Hebrew characters):¹⁷

Mich wundert’s, dass wir bei so manchen ebräischen Heldengedichten unserer Sprache noch keine Epopee über Moses haben [...]. Doch möchte ich mit dieser kleinen Exposition keinen Deutschen, sondern einen deutschen Ebräer geweckt haben! Ihm ist der Gegenstand national: seine unbefangenere, frühere Bekanntschaft mit den Dichtern seiner Nation müsste ihm eine ältere Naivität [Naivität] geben, als man von einem deutschen Gelehrten fordern könnte.¹⁸

According to Euchel’s assertion, Herder’s stated wish that a Hebrew poet write an epos on Moses seems to have prompted Wessely to write his biblical epic. Thus, the signal given by such a prominent German writer and scholar ostensibly had a seminal effect on Wessely, which Euchel was very pleased to report. To Euchel, this influence indicated a quintessential bond between German literature and the newly emerging modern Hebrew literature. It implies that the Haskalah received its cues from its German

¹⁵ A. A. [Isaac Euchel], “[Bikoret Sefer Shirei Tiferet]” [Review of the Book ‘Shirei Tiferet,’] *Hame’asef*, VI (1790), p. 211.

¹⁶ A. A. [Isaac Euchel], “Hemshech Bikoret Sefer Shirei Tiferet,” *Hame’asef*, VI (1790), p. 346.

¹⁷ Joh. Gottfried Herder, *Vom Geist der ebräischen Poesie*, II (Gotha, 1890), pp. 52–53.

¹⁸ “It has been matter of wonder to me, that among so many heroick [!] poems in our language on subjects of Hebrew history, we have yet none in which Moses is the hero [...]. Yet I would wish, by this brief exposition to excite to such an undertaking, not a German, but a German Hebrew. To him the subject is a national one. His more unbiassed [!] and more early acquaintance with the poets of his nation, must give to the work more simplicity in his mind, than could be expected of a German scholar.” Translation by James Marsh, in J. G. Herder, *The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry*, II (Burlington, 1833), pp. 60–61.

counterpart. Accordingly, Wessely's creative work followed the dictates of Haskalah ideology, namely, establishing the up-and-coming Hebrew literature on a par with modern European literatures.

As a consequence, it seems to suggest that Herder initiated the idea that the revived Hebrew literature should seek its themes and language from the Hebrew Scriptures, revered by Christians and Jews alike.

Thus, Euchel started the trend among Maskilim and latter-day scholars of Haskalah that attributed Wessely's initiative to write the epos *Shirei Tiferet* to Herder.¹⁹

This concept was not universally accepted by Haskalah scholars. Noah Rosenbloom, for one, in his book on Wessely's *Shirei Tiferet*, dismissed the assertion about Wessely's indebtedness to Herder and for that matter also to Klopstock and his *Der Messias*.²⁰

As promoted by Euchel, this notion was picked up by Shalom Hacohen (1771–1845), who became the editor of *Hame'asef* (1809–1811). He followed Euchel as editor, and Wessely as a poet, writing his own biblical epics. In the German introduction to his biblical epos *Mata'ei Kedem Al Admat Tzafon* (The Orchard of Ancient Times on Northern Soil), which dwells on the stories of Abraham and David, Shalom Hacohen bemoaned the passing of Lowth and Herder and finally of Wessely, who improved on what the first two did. Hacohen related Herder and Wessely as “the intimate friends of our oriental poetical art.”²¹ There is no doubt that the second generation of Maskilim, exemplified by Shalom Hacohen, did consider Herder's work on biblical poetry as seminal to the growth of the literature of Haskalah. And indeed, as mentioned earlier, it was Shalom Hacohen who wrote biblical epics, as discussed in chapter two, continuing in Wessely's theme and style.

It should be noted that while Euchel was thrilled to report on Herder's direct impact on Wessely, there are other contemporary reports that attributed Wessely's incentive to an internal source.²² Wessely's first biographer, David Friedrichsfeld (1755?–1810), did not share Euchel's

¹⁹ For example, Klausner, *Historiah Shel Hasifrut Ha'ivrit Hahadashah*, I, p. 30. For other sources, see note 55 below.

²⁰ Noah H. Rosenbloom, *Ha'epos Hamikra'i Me'idan Hahaskalah Vehaparshanut* [The Exodus Epic of the Enlightenment and Exegesis] (Israel, 1983), pp. 10, 11, 14, 24. Rosenbloom reviews the critical literature on this topic citing several critics.

²¹ Shalom Hacohen, “Vorrede,” *Mata'ei Kedem Al Admat Tzafon* [The Orchard of Ancient Times on Northern Soil] (Roedelhein, 1807), p. iii: “Mit dem Tode Herders und Wessely's [!], dieser zwei trauesten Freunde unserer orientalischen Dichtkunst....”

²² Klausner, *Historiah Shel Hasifrut Ha'ivrit Hahadashah*, I, pp. 136–138, reports on the customary notion of Herder being the source (citing also Meisl and Greatz) as well as internal sources (citing Friedrichsfeld; see note 23).

notion, claiming in effect that it was Wessely's participation in the *Be'ur* project, the commentary on and translation of the Pentateuch into German in Hebrew characters, initiated and led by Mendelssohn, that gave him — Wessely — the impetus to write the epos *Shirei Tiferet*.²³

Importantly, Wessely himself had a different, and quite an original, explanation for writing his epos. He claimed that in writing the biblical epic, he was going in the footsteps of past Jewish scholars, who taught and wrote commentaries on the Hebrew Bible using poetry as a medium.²⁴ Thus, he did not consider himself a poet but an exegete, a commentator, and as such he wrote his biblical epic. One can understand Wessely's position from his perspective, being one of most conservative and most traditionally observant, yet modern, among the group of early Maskilim. Moreover, his treatment of biblical stories in his epos is strictly traditional and is based on Jewish classical sources, and bears no external influence of any German writer such as Herder.

Mendelssohn's Reference to Herder in His *Be'ur*

Another major literary work which stands out as the achievement of the German Haskalah was the *Be'ur*. It was initiated by Mendelssohn and followed by some other Maskilim. It dominated the Haskalah scene and has had a major impact on the creative thinking and the literary energies of many of the Maskilim.

The *Be'ur* epitomized the very essence of Haskalah ideology and its *Geist*. It exemplified Haskalah's desire to return to the Hebrew Bible (as opposed to the preoccupation with the Halachah — religious law — in rabbinical writings) and to biblical Hebrew as a mode of creative expression so as to identify and exhibit the beauty found in the Hebrew Bible.

Haskalah literature and its leading proponents were searching for paradigms and models to emulate and adopt in an effort to define its new literary orientation and to set up a mode of its poetics. They found a fertile ground in Mendelssohn's *Be'ur*.

To find out any possible connection between Mendelssohn's treatment of the Hebrew Bible and Herder's, one should look for any reference in Mendelssohn's introduction, translation and commentary in the *Be'ur*.

Mendelssohn's introduction to his edition of the Pentateuch is highly traditional in his approach to sensitive issues concerning the divine origins of the Torah, its authorship, and the authentic transmission (*Masorah*) of the

²³ David Friedrichsfeld, *Zecher Tzadik* [Commemoration of a Righteous Man] (Amsterdam, 1809), p. 44.

²⁴ Naphtali Hertz Wessely, "Petihat Hameshorer" [Poet's Introduction], *Shirei Tiferet* [Songs of Glory] (Berlin, 1789), pp. 10–11 (my pagination).

text. Mendelssohn relied on traditional talmudic sources and authoritative medieval commentators and quoted them abundantly.²⁵

With very few exceptions, there is an obvious desire to avoid any use of non-Jewish sources in order not to alienate the rabbis and traditional readers. Mendelssohn did refer to Christian scholars in general in order to present their finds regarding the Samaritans scriptures (p. 20). And as he referred to erroneous translations that are found in the revised polyglot Bible, he told the readers “if you wish to know the malice of these authors” you can find the revisions listed in “Eichhorn’s introduction to the Torah” (p. 48). However, Mendelssohn did not cite Eichhorn’s own theories or views of the Pentateuch.

Mendelssohn also rejected Christian translations of the Scriptures because they were not obliged to, nor did they, follow Jewish tradition, which is obligatory on Jews (p. 50).

Thus, it may explain why Mendelssohn did not refer to Herder in his introduction, and it can be assumed that the Maskilim were aware of Mendelssohn’s policy not to cite any non-Jewish references in his introduction to the *Be’ur*.

What is perhaps less known is that, nevertheless, Mendelssohn did refer to Herder, without mentioning his name, in his commentary to Genesis 4: 25. Mendelssohn acknowledged that “an author who is not one of our people” suggested a nice solution to the understanding of the biblical text. This anonymous reference was identified as referring to Herder.²⁶ So, Mendelssohn was open to accept Herder’s views in relations to the Hebrew Scriptures without openly citing his name.

Another possible source of Mendelssohn’s ties to Herder may be found in the introduction to the Song of Moses (known in Hebrew as ‘*Shirat Hayam*’ [Song of the Sea]) in Exodus. There, Mendelssohn expounded on the quality of biblical poetry and its beauty, and thus may have manifested a

²⁵ Moshe ben Menaḥem [Mendelsson], *Or Linetivah* [Light for Path] (Berlin, 1783), where the introduction was published separately. It was also published in the book of Genesis, see next note (no. 26).

²⁶ Moshe ben Menaḥem [Mendelsson], *Sefer Netivot Hashalom* [Book of Paths of Peace], “Bereisheet” [Genesis] (Berlin, 1783), 4: 25, p. 23b. See Peretz Sandler, *Habe’ur Latorah* [Mendelssohn’s Edition of the Pentateuch] (Jerusalem, 1941; 1984²), p. 103 (citing Shmuel David Luzzatto who attributed the anonymous writer as Herder). M. Z. Segal attributed the reference to Herder in his article “Leheker Tzuratah Shel Hashirah Hamikra’it” [Probe into the Form of Biblical Poetry], *Sefer Klausner* [Klausner Festschrift] (Tel Aviv, 1937), p. 99, n. 34, where he also discusses Mendelssohn’s indebtedness to Lowth.

similar appreciation of biblical poetry as found in Herder's writings.²⁷ In it, Mendelssohn stated that biblical poetry is much superior to any secular poetry — even to the best of poetry — in form, structure, splendor and beauty (*Exodus*, p. 66b). In analyzing biblical poetry, Mendelssohn showed the potential of the Hebrew language as a language of exalted creativity, a language of the sublime. Herder, for his part, expounded on the beauty and richness of biblical poetry in his *Vom Geist der ebräischen Poesie* in 1782/3.²⁸

Even though Mendelssohn and Herder disagreed on the nature and origins of language,²⁹ both thought highly of biblical Hebrew. It may appear as though Mendelssohn's cited quotation about biblical Hebrew would mirror Herder's general appreciation of Hebrew language and biblical poetry although it is not necessarily influenced by it.³⁰

The problem with Herder's views is that he was rather ambiguous about the divine origins of the Hebrew language, expressing different views in different books. He rejected the notion of the divine origins of poetry in his early work (on the Archaeology of the Hebrews³¹) in opposition to J. G. Hamann and the prevailing traditional notion. Subsequently, he rejected the divine origins of language (in his essay on the origins of language³²), only to reverse his position and to accept the notion of the divine origins of poetry (in *Älteste Urkunde des Menschengeschlechts*, 1774³³), and consequently of language, and then, again, to take an ambiguous stand in *Vom Geist der ebräischen Poesie* in 1782/3.³⁴

Herder's ambiguity notwithstanding, it should be pointed out that this similar appreciation for the biblical language and poetry on the part of both

²⁷ Moshe ben Menahem [Mendelsson], *Sefer Netivot Hashalom* [Book of Paths of Peace], "Shmot" [Exodus] (Berlin, 1783), pp. 52a–56b; Herder, *Vom Geist der ebräischen Poesie*, II, p. 24 (see note 61 below for Herder's text).

²⁸ See note 30 below.

²⁹ See discussion in Moshe Schwarcz, *Safah, Mytos, Omanut* [Language, Myth, Art] (Tel Aviv, 1967), pp. 55–56, 63–64; Zeev Levi, *Hayahadut Bitmunat Olamam Shel Hamann, Herder veGoethe* [Judaism in the Worldview of J. G. Hamman, J. G. Herder and W. v. Goethe] (Jerusalem, 1995), chap. II, pp. 73–74, 77–78.

³⁰ *Vom Geist der ebräischen Poesie*, II, pp. 23–24.

³¹ "Fragmente zu einer 'Archäologie des Morgenlandes' 1769," *Herders Sämtliche Werke*, Herausgegeben von Bernhard Suphan, Sechster Band (Berlin, 1883).

³² "Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache" (1788).

³³ "Älteste Urkunde des Menschengeschlechts," *Herders Werke*, Herausgegeben von Theodor Matthias, Dritter Band (Leipzig und Wien, n. d.).

³⁴ See Herder, *Vom Geist der ebräischen Poesie*, II, p. 24. See also Schwarcz, *Safah, Mytos, Omanut*, pp. 54–79; Levi, *Hayahadut Bitmunat Olamam Shel Hamann, Herder veGoethe*, chap. II, pp. 99–137, especially p. 117.

writers should not be construed as a conclusive proof of Herder's influence on the Jewish philosopher, for Mendelssohn most probably relied on intrinsic Jewish sources for such a notion, more specifically on Juda Halevi's *Hakuzari*, which proclaimed the original qualities that prevailed in the early stages of the Hebrew language.³⁵

Because of the ambiguity in Herder's position on biblical language and poetry, it is likely that the Maskilim read in Herder what they wanted to read and disregarded that which was contrary to their concept of Hebrew and poetry.

A case in point is the use of a citation from Herder as discussed below:

Herder's Influence in Biblical Poetry: Review Article on "Shir Hashirim" Published in *Hame'asef*

Reference to Herder may be found more often than not in the context of discussions on biblical poetry. One such significant reference to Herder is included in a review article on the publication of the new edition of Shir Hashirim (Song of Songs). The article, by D – S (David Schlesinger), was published in 1790 in *Hame'asef*.³⁶ It reviewed Mendelssohn's translation into German (in Hebrew characters), which was published posthumously in 1788 by the Maskilim's publishing house with commentary by Aaron Wolfsohn (1754–1835) and Joel Brill.³⁷

The reviewer's hesitation to quote a non-Judaic source in biblical scholarship — in this case, Herder — is noticeable and understandable. In as much as the Maskilim wanted to relate their intellectual and literary activities to those of the German *Aufklärung*, they had to be very careful about external ideas regarding Judaism and especially the Hebrew Bible.

The Maskilim could not afford to antagonize the more moderate followers of Haskalah by relying on external, non-Jewish — namely, Christian — treatment of the Hebrew Bible. To make sure that the moderate

³⁵ Juda Halevi, *Hakuzari*, Satanow's edition (Berlin, 1795), p. 30b, article II (item 35): The "Haver" [Jewish scholar] says that Hebrew is superior to other languages, is the most important of all languages, and is the language that God spoke with Adam and Eve. Mendelssohn asserts the superiority of Hebrew in other writings; see, for example, his *Leshon Hazahav* [Golden Language] (Berlin, 1783), on the title page.

³⁶ D – S, [Review article on the publication of a new edition of Shir Hashirim (Song of Songs)], published in *Hame'asef*, VI (1790), pp. 57–61, 87–96. D – S is identified by M. Steinschneider, *Catalogus Librorum in Bibliotheca Bodleiana*, I (Berlin, 1852–1860; Facsimile ed.: Berlin, 1931; Hildesheim, 1964), p. 577, as David Schlesinger.

³⁷ *Megilat Shir Hashirim* [Scroll of Song of Songs], translated by Moshe ben Menahem [Mendelssohn] with commentary by Aaron Wolfsohn and Joel Brill (Berlin, 1788).

Maskilim would not reject Haskalah writings or even ban such biblical endeavor as the *Be'ur*, the Maskilim's treatment of non-Jewish sources of biblical scholarship was a very cautious one.

Understandably, this reviewer endeavored to justify the use of external sources, which was indeed quite a new and daring step, by relying on a precedent of a recognized authority in contemporary Judaism, who did exactly that. In this case he used Mendelssohn, the exemplary figure of Haskalah, as such an authority. Thus, the reviewer cited from Mendelssohn's introduction to his edition of *Kohelet* (*Ecclesiastes*). Eagerly, he showed that Mendelssohn did not hesitate to examine non-Jewish commentaries and used them if they were "truthful."³⁸

It should also be noted, as was mentioned earlier, that Mendelssohn himself had stated that one of the goals in issuing the new *Be'ur*, and especially in his translation into German, was to present a Jewish-oriented translation that is based essentially on the Jewish understanding of the biblical text. Mendelssohn intended the *Be'ur* to counteract non-Jewish translations that were contrary to Jewish tradition, some of which were biased against Judaism.³⁹

Having such prooftext, the reviewer then threw in a literary bombshell, stating that "truly, the foundations of the translation of this scroll [Shir Hashirim], in general and in particular, are based on the foundation of another precious and respectable translation, which came out of the mouth of *Hehacham Ha'adon* Herder [the pundit Herr Herder]." In a footnote he cited Herder's translation of Song of Songs, *Lieder der Liebe*, published in 1781.⁴⁰ The reviewer had high praise for Herder, who "is renowned in glory and adoration for his instructive (theoretical) [עימוד]" matter in his delightful book, which he had published, that discusses the topic of poetry in the Hebrew language. For there, he proved his might and strength in the

³⁸ [Moses Mendelsson], "Hakdamat Hamefaresh" [The Commentator's Introduction], *Sefer Megilat Kohelet* [The Book of the Scroll of Kohelet] (Berlin, 1770), at the end of the unpaginated introduction (p. 18, in my counting): "and as the sages warned us to accept the truth from whoever speaks it, I searched also in the bag of commentators who are not one of the children of Israel, and if I found a true matter in their mouth [in their words], I raised it to God and it became sanctified." See, D – S, [Review article on Shir Hashirim], *Hame'asef*, VI, p. 57.

³⁹ *Or Linetivah*, p. 50 (my pagination). This argument has been repeated by the Maskilim. See Moshe Pelli, *Moshe Mendelssohn: Bechavlei Masoret* [M. M.: Bonds of Tradition] (Tel Aviv, 1972), p. 70.

⁴⁰ *Lieder der Liebe*, 1778, *Herders Sämmtliche Werke*, Herausgegeben von Bernhard Suphan, Achter Band (Berlin, 1892).

ways of that language" (p. 58).⁴¹ In a footnote, the reviewer cited the title of the Herder's book, *Vom Geist der ebräischen Poesie*.⁴²

This is a very significant point, which, to my knowledge, is discussed for the first time in Hebrew Haskalah and in *Hame'asef*. It is important to note that in the introduction to their edition of Song of Songs, the editors, Wolfsohn and Brill, did not mention any ties to Herder's published translation nor did they provide any reference to Herder himself and his other works on biblical poetry.⁴³

The reviewer's allegation about Mendelssohn's indebtedness to Herder notwithstanding — a topic that deserves a separate study — his intention went beyond this revelation. For, in effect, David Schlesinger wished to point out that Mendelssohn 'did a better job' than Herder and in effect improved the latter's translation of Song of Songs.

So, while the reviewer gave proper credit to Herder whom he admired for sure, his praise for Mendelssohn was double-fold. According to his florid and figurative language, which is based on talmudic texts, "*Hehacham Ha'adon* Herder plunged deep into mighty waters and brought up a precious pearl in his hand [—] in his cited translation. However, our master Rambeman [R. Moshe ben Menahem] Z. L. [*zichro livrachah* — of blessed memory], went over [the text] [...] and cleansed and refined it, at times by changing words and at times by linking the rhetorical usages [*melitzot*]; sometimes he added to it and sometimes he subtracted from it[;] there was hardly one verse that he had not scrutinized, so that eventually this translation came out crystal-clear and very polished" (p. 58).

The reviewer then supported his contention by citing four verses from Song of Songs (6:8, 4:9, 7:9, 2:1) in the two versions of translation: namely, Herder's and Mendelssohn's, side by side. And he concluded, "from all of this, the reader may judge for himself about the work of our master Rambeman Z. L., and should see how he [...] sweetened the figurative expression [*melitzah*] very much either by adding or subtracting a word, or by changing the order of the figurative language, according to his wise judgment and knowledge in these two languages, which are immense" (p. 61).

So, the reviewer's aim was to glorify Mendelssohn and his translation over Herder's while still showing great respect for the German writer.

To soften the 'sensational revelation' of Mendelssohn's indebtedness to Herder, the reviewer or the editor remarked in another footnote that the editors-publishers of this book, Brill and Wolfsohn, themselves, had

⁴¹ As cited in the article referred to in note 36 above.

⁴² Citing the Leipzig, 1787 edition.

⁴³ *Megilat Shir Hashirim* [Scroll of Song of Songs], *Hamesh Megilot* [Five Scrolls], translated by Moshe ben Menahem [Mendelssohn] with commentary by Aaron Wolfsohn and Joel Brill (Vienna, 1807).

already expounded in 1789 on the difference between the two translations in a German periodical, showing the superiority of Mendelssohn's translation.⁴⁴

The reviewer's position is typical of the Maskilim, who glorified Mendelssohn and deemed his work superior to anybody else's — superior even to such a great writer as Herder. Ostensibly, the editors of *Hame'asef* were pleased to print such a review.

Citing Herder's Work as Acceptable

The Maskilim's position about citing non-Jewish writings on biblical topics is at best ambiguous. While we have noticed some hesitation on their part, there was also some inclination to cite non-Jewish sources as authoritative. The Maskilim aspired to show the compatibility of Judaism and the Enlightenment and the need to broaden one's scope of knowledge to include secular disciplines. *Hochmah*, wisdom and secular disciplines, were promoted by the Maskilim regardless of whether it came from a Jewish or a non-Jewish source. "Accept the truth from whoever speaks it," was a motto adopted by Mendelssohn and the Maskilim in such controversial cases, which is based on Maimonides.⁴⁵ According to the mindset of the Maskilim, secular studies may strengthen the very understanding of Judaism and affirm a person's faith as do external ideas so long that they do not contradict any of the tenets or the spirit of Judaism.

This concept was advocated by the reviewer. D – S dismissed the notion, expressed by some who, in his view, pretend to be pious, that wisdom and knowledge may be found only in Jewish writings and that anything else should be totally rejected as nonsense and void and even as an abomination. There is no justification for such a notion — he argued — and true wisdom, coming out in non-Jewish writing may be acceptable as long as it does not contradict "our sacred religion" (p. 87). In so doing, he

⁴⁴ D – S, [Review article], *Hame'asef*, VI (1790) p. 61, citing an article in *Intelligenz-blatt der allgemeinen Litteraturzeitung*, published in 1789.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 57, citing Mendelsson, "Hakdamat Hamefaresh," *Sefer Megilat Kohelet*, at the end of the unpaginated introduction (p. 18, in my pagination; see full quotation in note 38 above): "Lekabel ha'emet mimi she'amro" [to accept the truth from whoever speaks it]. This phrase has been repeated constantly by the Maskilim in support of their stand and ideology (for example, *Hame'asef*, I, 1783/4, pp. 16, 28; VII, 1794–1797, pp. 28, 302, and many other places). It is based on Maimonides, in his introduction to *Shemonah Perakim* [Eight Chapters], on *Pirkei Avot* [The Ethics of the Fathers], *The Eight Chapters of Maimonides on Ethics*, Joseph I. Gorfinkle, ed. (New York, 1912), p. 6 ("Hakdamah" [Forward]), pp. 35–36 (in the English "Forward"): "As one should accept the truth from whatever source it proceeds."

recommended that the reader follow in the footsteps of Moses Mendelssohn “to search and probe [...] the truth.”

Again, the reviewer relied on Mendelssohn to prove his point. Mendelssohn endeavored to reconstruct the aesthetics of biblical poetry in his *Be'ur*, treating it as literature, similar — yet much superior — to any contemporary European literature. According to Mendelssohn, the original biblical poetics was lost in time, as was the loss of the art of ancient Hebrew music. Now, it is up to the students of the Hebrew Bible to reconstruct the lost poetics. In order to appreciate biblical poetry — he stressed — one must also have the knowledge of some contemporary European poetry (p. 94).

The reviewer then concluded: “Therefore, how profitable and pleasant it would be if Jewish youths will be trained to study the books composed by scholars and men of fame in every generation, where these things are thoroughly explained, such as the book which I cited above” (p. 94). He consequently cited Herder and his book on Hebrew poetry, and also Eichhorn’s introduction to the Old Testament.

It is an emblematic review which profoundly advocated the stand of the Haskalah in relation to European literature. It promoted building bridges between Haskalah Judaism and European culture and scholarship. While showing Herder’s contribution to biblical scholarship, the reviewer is amplifying Mendelssohn’s unique grasp of the Hebrew Bible as surpassing that of Herder. Concurrently, the reviewer utilized this article to state his theory of European poetry as well as of biblical poetry (p. 98).

Wolfsohn's Citation of Herder

No hesitation in citing Herder’s work is found in an article on a biblical theme in *Hame’asef* written by Aaron Wolfsohn, a biblical scholar, as mentioned earlier, and a future editor of the journal. In a study on the identity of “*Behemot*” (in Job 40: 15), Wolfsohn had no problem accepting the rendition by the latest translators led by “*Ha’adon Hehacham Herder*,” citing his book on Hebrew poetry. ‘*Behemot*’ is identified as the Hippopotamus.⁴⁶ It should be noted that most references to Herder called him “*Hehacham Ha’adon*” or “*Hehacham*” — honorific titles that express respect to — yet showing some distance from — this gentile writer.

⁴⁶ Aaron Halle [Wolfsohn], “Hineh Na Behemot” [Behold the Behemot (Bahemoth)], (in the section devoted to ‘Be’ur Sifrei Kodesh’) [Commentary on Scriptures], *Hame’asef*, V (1789), pp. 291–293. Related to it is an article before this one where Wolfsohn discusses the Hippopotamus (pp. 289–291).

Brill's Citation of Herder in His Introduction to Psalms

It stands to reason that reference to Herder's work on Hebrew poetry is found in the Maskilim's writings related to biblical commentary or translation of the Hebrew Bible. And indeed we find references to Herder in the introduction to several biblical works by the Maskilim.

In the introduction to his edition of Psalms with this commentary and translation, Joel Brill delineated his definition of poetry and his notion of *melitzah* (rhetoric, aesthetics), stating that the definitions he presented are not his own; he collected them from Jewish sources as well as from the books by gentile scholars ("*hachmei ha'umot*") who wrote in this matter "good and straightforward things."⁴⁷

Upon discussing biblical parallelism, as part of his review of biblical rhetoric and figurative language, Brill praised "*Ha'adon Heḥacham Herder*" for explaining this poetic parallelism in the Hebrew Bible using a beautiful analogy of "two twin brothers," as cited in Herder's book, which appropriately quoted Psalms 133: 1: "How good and how pleasant it is that brothers dwell together."⁴⁸

Brill further referred to Herder's book, and highly recommended that the reader who wishes to read more about biblical rhetoric should go to Herder's book and there "he will find delicacies for his soul" (p. 10a). Brill, however, proceeded on his own to delineate the nature of biblical *melitzah* following Mendelssohn's introduction to the Song of Moses ("*Shirat Hayam*" — Song of the Sea) in his *Netivot Hashalom*, in Exodus.⁴⁹ However, it should be pointed out that in addition to this biblical reliance on Herder, he had some references to other German writers. Indeed, Brill presented some definitions of the fable which are based on Lessing's formulation.⁵⁰

Ben Zeev's Introduction to the Hebrew Scriptures

On the other hand, the biblical scholar and Hebrew grammarian Juda Leib Ben Zeev, who wrote introductions to the books of the Hebrew Bible early in the nineteenth century, exhibited a very cautious treatment of non-Jewish

⁴⁷ Joel Brill, "Hakdamah Rishonah" [First Introduction], *Sefer Zmirot Israel* [The Book of the Hymns of Israel], *Sefer Tehilim* [Psalms] with German translation by Moshe ben Menaḥem, and exegesis by Joel Brill (Berlin, 1791), p. 3a. Brill cites Herder as source also in the second introduction, p. 14b.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 7b, citing *Vom Geist der ebräischen Poesie*, I, pp. 22, 23 (from an earlier edition).

⁴⁹ See footnote 27 above.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 7a. See my book *Sugot Vesugyot Besifrut Hahaskalah Ha'ivrit* [Kinds of Genre in Haskalah Literature: Types and Topics] (Israel, 1999), p. 126

sources. In the general introduction to his *Mavo Lemikra'ei Kodesh* (Introduction to the Holy Scriptures), published in 1810, he stated his policy to rely on talmudic sages for their views on the Bible, “if their views agree with the straight-forward interpretation of the text [“*peshat*”], with proper reasoning [or common sense; “*notim el sevarah hayesharah*”], and do not contradict the clear truth.”⁵¹ In cases where they deviated from the ‘*peshat*,’ Ben Zeev stated that he turned to the “sages of [past] generations” who are known for their scholarship, probably referring to medieval commentators (pp. 8, 9).

While scholars asserted Eichhorn’s influence on Ben Zeev,⁵² Ben Zeev himself did not cite any non-Jewish sources, let alone Herder. However, he cited many Jewish sources, such as Maimonides, Nachmanides, David Kimhi, and Abravanel, thus showing his professed commitment to traditional interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures.

The closest Ben Zeev came to citing a non-Jewish source was in the introduction to Ezra where he mentioned Eusebius as source of information (74b). Also, in a small-type footnote in the introduction to the book of Joshua, he made a comment about the lapse of time, referring to “the writers of the nations” (*sofrei ha'amim*), namely, non-Jewish sources, without mentioning any name.⁵³

Shlomo Loewisohn’s *Melitzat Yeshurun* and Its Relation to Herder

A major contribution to the study of biblical rhetoric and poetics was Shlomo Loewisohn’s (1789–1821) *Melitzat Yeshurun* (The Rhetoric of Jeshurun) published in 1816. It is one of the most comprehensive early books in Haskalah literature, which is devoted to biblical poetics. Loewisohn’s book is cited in scholarly studies as a seminal work of Haskalah’s attempt to create a corpus of poetics and rhetoric of biblical literature. Even though Loewisohn mentioned several external sources in classical literature, such as Horace, Virgil, Longinus, and Shakespeare, he did not cite any contemporary or recent non-Jewish biblical scholar such as

⁵¹ Juda Leib Ben Zeev, *Mavo Lemikra'ei Kodesh* [Introduction to the Holy Scriptures] (Vienna, 1810; G. Kressel facsimile edition, 1967), pp. 6, 8, 9 (my pagination).

⁵² F. Lachover, *Toldot Hasifrut Ha'ivrit Ha'hadashah* [History of Modern Hebrew Literature], I (Tel Aviv, 1928), p. 80; Klausner, *Historiah Shel Hasifrut Ha'ivrit Ha'hadashah*, I, p. 185; G. Kressel, “Befetah Hamavo” [At the Opening to the Introduction”] in Ben Zeev, *Mavo Lemikra'ei Kodesh*, p. 3 (my pagination).

⁵³ Ben Zeev, *Mavo Lemikra'ei Kodesh.*, p. 4a.

Lowth or Herder.⁵⁴ On the other hand, he did cite Wessely's *Shirei Tiferet* and Joel Brill's introduction to Psalms.

Nevertheless, most scholars expressed their view that Herder had exerted influence on Loewisohn's *Melitzat Yeshurun*.⁵⁵ For example, Klausner was of the opinion that "certainly, there is a visible influence of Herder's famous book *Vom Geist der ebräischen Poesie*, and perhaps also of Eichhorn's [...] book, but not more than an influence."⁵⁶

Most probably it was Isaac Baer Levinsohn who started this notion of Loewisohn's indebtedness to Herder. In a letter to his father, he wrote, "certainly you have seen [...] the book *Melitzat Yeshurun*; by the way, let me inform you that most of his words there are taken from the books of *Hechacham* Herder, the author of the wonderful book *Über die ebraische Poesie* [sic!]."⁵⁷

On the other hand, Tova Cohen has shown Loewisohn's indebtedness to Lowth's work on biblical poetry.⁵⁸ But she did not examine Herder's possible influence on Loewisohn. Only in one case does she say that Loewisohn interpreted Song of Songs, in counter-distinction to Mendelssohn, as a love story, not citing the rabbinical interpretation of the book as an allegory. While not following traditional interpretation, which Mendelssohn cited, Loewisohn did accept Herder's view (without citing his

⁵⁴ Shlomo Loewisohn, *Melitzat Yeshurun* [The Rhetoric of Jeshurun] (Vienna, 1816).

⁵⁵ Lachover, *Toldot Hasifrut Ha'ivrit Hahadashah*, I, p. 120; Avraham Shaanan, *Hasifrut Ha'ivrit Hahadashah Lizrame'ah* [Currents in Modern Hebrew Literature], I (Tel Aviv, 1962), p. 114; Israel Zinberg, *Toldot Sifrut Israel* [History of Jewish Literature], V (Tel Aviv, 1959), p. 264; Jacob Fichman, "Al Melitzat Yeshurun" [On *Melitzat Yeshurun*] in Shlomo Loewisohn, *Melitzat Yeshurun* [The Rhetoric of Jeshurun] (Tel Aviv, 1944), p. ix.

⁵⁶ Klausner, *Historiah Shel Hasifrut Ha'ivrit Hahadashah*, I, p. 271. He cites Eichhorn's book on the Old Testament on p. 185, n. 3.

⁵⁷ I. B. Levinsohn, *Be'er Yitzhak* [Yitzhak's Well] (Warsaw, 1899), p. 28, n. 1. See also, Tova Cohen, *Mehalom Limtzi'ut* [From Dream to Reality] (Israel, 1982), p. 62; Klausner, *Historiah Shel Hasifrut Ha'ivrit Hahadashah*, I, pp. 272, 273–274, also cites from Graetz that Loewisohn understood the splendor of Hebrew poetry... more than Herder; he understood the language as a mother tongue (citing from Zvi Graetz, *Divrei Yemei Hayehudim* [History of the Jews] [Vilna, 1908/9 – last part], p. 327). Israel Moshe Horn, in his chapter on Herder's influence on Shlomo Loewisohn, argues against Levinsohn's allegation of direct borrowing from Herder; but he does argue that there was an influence. See his "Al Melitzat Yeshurun" [On *Melitzat Yeshurun*], *Maḥkarim* [Research; Studies] (Israel, 1951), pp. 135–142.

⁵⁸ Tova Cohen, 'Melitzat Yeshurun' *LiShlomo Loewisohn* [S. L.'s *Melitzat Yeshurun* (The Rhetoric of Jeshurun)] (Ramat Gan, 1988). See Robert Lowth, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews* (1787) (Hildesheim, 1969, facsimile edition).

name) that rejected the allegorical interpretation of Song of Songs and claimed that it constituted a series of love songs.⁵⁹ Loewisoohn drew on several Hebrew writers among them on Joel Brill, whom he admired, and on his introduction to Psalms.⁶⁰

A comparison with Herder's work is still wanting.

Herder's Influence on the Maskilim's Poetics and Aesthetics

In addition to Herder's influence in the theory of biblical poetry, we should look for his impact on the formulation of poetics and aesthetics or the notion of poetry in Haskalah literature. This may or may not be related to biblical poetry. Several examples from the major writers, Wessely, Euchel and Brill will suffice for general reference, which may still require additional probe.

Herder's Possible Influence on Wessely: Traces of Herder's influence may be found in Wessely's concept of poetry, which he endeavored to define in his introduction to *Shirei Tiferet*. Wessely considered poetry as "God's gift" that is innate in man's soul. To him, the origin of poetry is divine. Wessely asserted that through poetry the poet is able to approach his reader directly and affect his soul in a unique way that cannot be achieved through prose. As mentioned earlier, Herder's stand regarding language and poetry, especially Hebrew, and their origins is rather ambiguous. Wessely could have read Herder's statement in support of the unique nature of Hebrew, as follows:

Was Etymologie und Grammatik betrifft (ich sage nicht Syntax und Schreibart), ist die alte ebräische Sprache ein Meisterwerk sinnlicher Kürze und Ordnung. Man möchte sagen: ein Gott habe sie für kindliche Menschen erfunden, um mit ihnen wie ein Spiel der frühesten Logik zu spielen.⁶¹

Euchel's View of Poetry: Likewise, Euchel presented his view of poetry, expressing his agreement with Wessely about the advantage of poetry and relating it to the senses of hearing and sight that are behind the

⁵⁹ Cohen, *Melitzat Yeshurun LiShlomo Loewisoohn*, pp. 44, 197.

⁶⁰ See text next to footnote 54 above, and also Cohen, *Melitzat Yeshurun LiShlomo Loewisoohn*, p. 45.

⁶¹ Herder, *Vom Geist der ebräischen Poesie*, II, p. 24. [English translation: "In regard to its etymology and grammar, (I do not say its syntax and style of composition) the ancient Hebrew language is a masterpiece of conciseness and orderly arrangement, corresponding to the impressions of sense. One might well suppose a Divine Being had devised it for the infancy of the human race, in order to communicate, as it were, in short, the earliest conceptions of logical order" (Herder, *The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry*, II, Translated by James Marsh, p. 29).]

art of music and painting. Now, this analogy was offered by Herder in *Vom Geist der ebräischen Poesie*, using the ear and the eye as the instruments through which poetry gets to the heart,⁶² although it should be noted that it was previously suggested by Bodmer and Breitinger.⁶³ According to Euchel, the artistic poem is a product of these two senses: hearing and sight. Man's soul seeks "perfection and order in everything as a whole and in its details." Thus, poetry is able to link directly and inwardly with man's soul and to communicate with it in its unique language. This notion was accepted by Wessely and most probably stemmed from Herder's writings.

Brill's View of Poetry: Brill, too, believed that poetry is "God given" and it is intended to arouse the soul's faculties.⁶⁴

The Hebrew Language and State of the People

In the Maskilim's views of the Hebrew language one can find some traces of Herder and some other German thinkers of the time. Firstly, the notion that Hebrew was the language of creation and "the mother of all languages" did prevail in the writings of several German writers, among them Hamann.⁶⁵ It was based on classical Christian and Jewish sources. Of course, the Maskilim did not have to resort to German thinkers to get this idea, which is ingrained in Judaic sources, especially in *Hakuzari*, but the contemporary German support of the same notion was always welcome.⁶⁶

Ben Zeev's Concept of Language: One of the topics of discussion among the Maskilim was language in its relations to the state of the people and to its culture. This was indeed part of an on-going discussion in the German *Aufklärung*. Ben Zeev stated in 1796 in his *Talmud Lashon Ivri* (Learning the Hebrew Language) that "the existence of a language is dependent on the existence of its people. It will rise with its rising and will fall when it falls."⁶⁷ He reiterated this concept in 1797 in the introduction to another book, *Otzar Hashorashim* (Treasure of Roots), saying that

⁶² Herder, *Vom Geist der ebräischen Poesie*, II, p. 21: "Sie sind Poesie fürs Auge und Ohr, durch welche beide sie das Herz besänftigen oder bestürmen."

⁶³ Max Wehrli, "The Age of Enlightenment," *German Literature A Critical Survey*, Bruno Boesch, ed. (London, 1971), p. 147.

⁶⁴ Brill, "Hakdamah Rishonah," *Sefer Zmirot Israel*, pp. 6–7.

⁶⁵ See E.L. Stahl and W.E. Yuill, *German Literature of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (New York, 1970), p. 55; Eric A. Blackall, *The Emergence of German as a Literary Language 1700–1775* (Cambridge, 1959), pp. 451ff.; J. M. Ritchie, *Periods in German Literature* (Great Britain, 1967), p. 87; Maurice Olender, *The Language of Paradise* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 4–5. Herder, *Vom Geist der ebräischen Poesie*, II, p. 24.

⁶⁶ See note 35, above.

⁶⁷ Juda Leib Ben Zeev, "Hakdamah" [Introduction], *Talmud Lashon Ivri* [Learning the Hebrew Language] (Vienna, 1827; first edition: 1796), p. 3a.

“language changes under similar circumstances as the changes that occurred to the people who speak it.”⁶⁸ Ben Zeev was trying to explain the decline of the Hebrew language as a result of the deteriorating conditions of the Jewish people in its exile.

While not citing Herder or referring to his work specifically, it could be assumed that Ben Zeev must have known Herder’s discussion on the relations of language and its culture.⁶⁹ In his discourse on the rise and fall of the Greek and Roman civilizations and others, Herder related their cultural achievements to their respective language. To Herder, language mirrors its culture, and it serves to improve humanity.

Herder’s Acceptance in the 1820s

In the 1820s, we notice a growing acceptance of Herder’s poetical works exemplified by the very publication of Herder’s poems in Hebrew translation.

Herder’s *Shlomo Melech Israel*, 1822: In 1822, Wilhelm Röther, a teacher of Hebrew language at the Gymnasium of Heidelberg, published a small book titled *Shlomo Melech Israel* (Shlomo King of Israel), a translation into Hebrew with the original German of Herder’s poems under the title *Salomoh, König von Israel*.⁷⁰ It is an 8-page pamphlet in small format in Hebrew and in German. The book divides Solomon’s life and work into two: his youth and his old age, and the respective viewpoints and wisdom of the wisest of all men. This division follows the accepted concept in rabbinical writings.

There is no introduction, unfortunately, but the translator selected three mottoes to express his view of Solomon’s wisdom. One motto praised wisdom and reason (from the “Proverbs of Salomon” — Mishlei 3: 13–18), the second cited the notion of love, from Song of Songs (4: 9–12), and the third, on skepticism and the meaninglessness of life, quoted from Kohelet (Ecclesiastes 1: 2): “*Havel havalim amar Kohelet havel havalim hakol havel*” (Vanity of Vanity, said Kohelet, all is vanity). Basically, these mottoes present a succinct summary of Salomon’s three literary masterpieces. Apparently, Röther intended it as a text for his students, enriching their

⁶⁸ Juda Leib Ben Zeev, *Otzar Hashorashim* [Treasure of Roots], I (Vienna, 1807), in the introduction, p. 12 (my pagination).

⁶⁹ *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit, Herders Werke*, IV, ed., Theodor Matthias (Leipzig and Wien, 18??), pp. 244–245, 448.

⁷⁰ Wilhelm Röther, *Shlomo Melech Israel* [Shlomo King of Israel] with German title: *Salomoh, König von Israel* (Heidelberg, 1822). The poem is taken from Herder’s Parabeln: “Der Jüngling Salomo” and “Salomo in seinem Alter,” *Herders Werke*, V, ed., Theodor Matthias (Leipzig und Wien, 18??), pp. 107–109.

knowledge of Hebrew by transforming Herder's German poems, linguistically back to their original cultural milieu.

Herder's Poems in Bikurei Ha'itim: Acceptance of Herder as a poet is noticed in *Bikurei Ha'itim* (The First Fruits of the Times), the *Haskalah* journal launched in 1820 in Vienna by the former editor of *Hame'asef*, Shalom Hacohen. It published three poems by Herder in translation. They are: "Sonne und Mond" (1823/4), selections from "Morgenländische Blumenlese" (1826/7), and "Das Kind der Sorge" (1830/1).⁷¹ The editor expressed his pride that Herder's poem, "Sonne und Mond," apparently was based on the Hebrew Midrash (Hulin 60b), thus highlighting the 'Jewish' aspect of Herder's work.

In *Bikurei Ha'itim*, we also notice the appearance of translations of other important German poets: Goethe, for one, and Schiller, who were omitted from *Hame'asef*. However, to those who claimed that *Hame'asef* was behind its time for not publishing contemporary poets, we can point out that the editors of *Bikurei Ha'itim* resorted to many of the eighteenth-century German writers, whose poems appeared in *Hame'asef*, and also recycled poems by Klopstock, Ramler, Gessner, Gellert, Kleist, and Lessing. Thus, the same explanation offered earlier concerning *Hame'asef's* policy of translation should be applied also to *Bikurei Ha'itim*, namely, its editors, too, resorted to the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century German literary canon in selecting their choice of poems to be translated.

As a matter of fact, in a footnote to selected fables translated or adapted from German to Hebrew, the translator, Joseph Weisse, pointed out to *Hame'asef's* tradition of publishing fables by "the then respectable poets, and also from the first French and German poets Voltaire, La Fontaine [...], and from the German: Lessing, Gellert, Herder [...], Gessner and others." His choice is indicative of canonical writers.⁷²

Joshua Steinberg in *Hamagid* in 1860 Citing Herder's Praise of Hebrew

In the 1860s, Herder's glorification of the Hebrew language and biblical poetry surfaced, as Joshua Steinberg (1825–1908), a Maskil who at that time was a student at the rabbinic college in Vilna, was advocating that Jews ought to know their national language, Hebrew. In an article in *Hamagid* (The Herald), Steinberg rebuked those who do not value the Hebrew language — "the holy and sublime, the First Lady of languages" — by pointing out several great non-Jewish historical personalities, including

⁷¹ *Bikurei Ha'itim*, IV (1823/4), pp. 138–141: "Sonne und Mond"; VII (1826/7), pp. 133–135: Aus "Morgenländische Blumenlese"; and XI (1830/1), pp. 162–163: "Das Kind der Sorge."

⁷² *Bikurei Ha'itim*, XII (1831/2), p. 143.

Luther and Chateaubriand, who had expressed their admiration for the Hebrew language. Finally, among them, he cited at length passages from “*Heḥacham*” Herder’s book on the spirit of Hebrew poetry where Herder glorified biblical Hebrew poetry above any ancient poetry.⁷³

Steinberg, who was later to become a lexicographer and a principal of a teachers seminary, used the early maskilic argument for the study of the Hebrew language: Even the non-Jews glorify the Hebrew language, thus, all the more so, Jews should adhere to the language of their heritage.

At this point, Herder is becoming an icon for promoting the Hebrew language.

Translation of Excerpts from Herder’s Work on Biblical Poetry in 1886

Only in 1886, do we note the publication of excerpts from Herder’s work on biblical poetry in Hebrew translation. Zvi Gutmann published a free translation titled *Sefat Emet* (Language of Truth) with a German title *Sprache der Wahrheit*.⁷⁴

The impetus to translate Herder’s work came to him, as he wrote in the introduction, after finding out that no translation of Herder’s work on “the Hebrew language and the holy poems of the holy language” had been done into Hebrew. Therefore, Gutmann undertook to prepare a “free translation” of these poems (introduction, pp. 5–6)

He considered Herder as “the great sage, whose name and praise are prominent among gentile and Jewish scholars” for his many books on “all the world’s disciplines.” Gutmann thought highly of Herder’s pure faith and his search for ‘truth’ ever since his youth. In an epilogue to the book, the author reached the conclusion that the Christian scholar exemplified three tenets of religion that agree with the “foundations of our faith”: Herder found that the spirit of Mosaic and biblical poetry is the spirit hovering over the creation and the spirit of the Israelite people; the purpose of any true religion is to direct man to act in good and straightforward ways; Israel, even though in exile, is still a nation among the nations (pp. 23–24).

Herder appears to Gutmann as philo-Jewish.

⁷³ Joshua Steinberg, “Kevod Sefat Hakodesh Vetifartah” [The Honor of the Sacred Tongue and Its Glory] *Hamagid* [The Herald], IV (No. 3, Jan 18, 1860), p. 1, citing Herder on the greatness of the biblical poets.

⁷⁴ Zvi Gutmann, *Sefat Emet* [Language of Truth], with a German title *Sprache der Wahrheit* (Botoșani, 1886).

Citing Herder in 1899 in *Sefer Hazichronot*, Levensohn's Biography

A similar trend may be found toward the end of the century. David Baer Natansohn (1832–1916), Levinsohn's biographer, argued that the Jewish people is unique in that its literature and its history are interwoven. In the introduction to the biography, Natansohn argued that despite the oppressions and persecutions of Jews throughout their history, they preserved their literary heritage. He then traced the treatment of Hebrew literature among non-Jewish writers, citing among other, the German *Hacham* Herder who revealed “the precious pearls that are found in our books of Torah in his book *Vom Geist der ebräischen Poesie*. The comments of this book, that are written in knowledge and understanding, place on us, the people of Israel, a crown of glory, and thus he [Herder] raised our stature among the nations, and paved the road for those coming after him to view our brethren, the Israelites, favorably.”⁷⁵

In a footnote, the writer quoted proudly from Joshua Steinberg's above mentioned article published in *Hamagid* in 1860 in which he translated from Herder's writings on the beauty of biblical Hebrew.⁷⁶

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In conclusion, it seems that acceptance of Johann Gottfried Herder, his writing and thought, in early Hebrew Haskalah in Germany was haphazard, but was definitely remarkably noticeable.

It should be noted that Herder was a Protestant theologian, and his commentary on biblical poetry is viewed, in several instances, from a somewhat Christological point of view — his literary analysis notwithstanding — tying the so-called Old Testament to the New Testament. This was probably one of the reasons for some slow acceptance by the Maskilim in his time.

However, later on in the nineteenth century, some Hebraists did not have any problems with his religious orientation. As a matter of fact, it enhanced Herder's very favorable statements about the Hebrew language and biblical poetry.

⁷⁵ David Baer Natansohn, in the introduction to Levinsohn's biography, *Sefer Hazichronot* [Book of Memoirs] (Warsaw, 1899), p. ii.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. ii. See note 73 above.

***LANGUAGE OF HASKALAH:
POETICS AND RHETORIC***

CHAPTER FIVE: THE ROLE OF *MELITZAH* IN EARLY HASKALAH LITERATURE AND ITS RECEPTION AT THE END OF THE PERIOD

The study of the reception of early Haskalah throughout the nineteenth century and at the end of the Haskalah period must take into account the changes in the perception of Hebrew poetics and aesthetics which emerged in that century.

The early Maskilim's efforts to compose poetry in a way that best expresses their unique use of the revived Hebrew language led them to resort to the language of the sublime and to the basic imprint of biblical Hebrew.

This came about as the Hebrew writers of the early Haskalah undertook to revive the Hebrew language and resuscitate Hebrew literature in their endeavor to shape the Judaism of the Haskalah.

As part of their vision for a cultural revival, the early Maskilim initiated a new orientation toward the Hebrew Bible and exhibited a special interest in its poetry and language. They followed a trend in the German *Aufklärung* which sought to probe the ‘spirit of Hebrew poetry,’ exemplified in the writings of Herder, as discussed in chapter four. The Maskilim examined the aesthetics of biblical poetry and analyzed biblical Hebrew in order to apply them to their own creative writing in “the new Hebrew,” a term that was coined at that time.¹ Haskalah pundits defined the poetics of biblical poetry and consequently of poetry in general, as seen in Moses Mendelssohn’s (1729–1786) *Be’ur*, the translation of the Pentateuch into German and its commentary, and in the writings of Naphtali Herz Wessely (1725–1805) and Joel Brill (1762–1802).²

¹ Mordechai Levison-Schnaber, in a letter to the Society of the Seekers of the Hebrew Language, *Hame’asef*, I (1783/4), p. 183: “*Leshon hakodesh hahadashah*” (The new holy tongue).

² *Netivot Hashalom* [Paths of Peace], *Sefer Shmot* [Exodus], Moses Mendelssohn, ed., II (Berlin, 1783), his discussion and commentary on שיר ים (Shirat Hayam) — The Song of Moses — in Exodus; Naphtali Herz Wessely, “*Petihat Hameshorer*” [Poet’s Introduction], *Shirei Tiferet* [Songs of Glory] (Berlin, 1789), pp. 10–11 (my pagination); Joel Brill, *Sefer Zmirot Israel* [The Book of the Hymns of Israel] (Berlin, 1791).

In choosing biblical Hebrew for their creative writing, the Maskilim were rejecting the rabbinic style, which they considered non-grammatical, a mixture of Hebrew and Aramaic, and generally representing the old world. The Hebrew Maskil sought new and modern means of expression to convey the new world-picture he wished to draw.

The wish to employ the new style of Hebrew may in itself be commendable, but achieving this style was not a simple matter; certainly, not all Maskilim were able to reach this goal. The early Maskilim drew upon that very same old cultural world which they rejected and against which they rebelled. Thus, despite their efforts to escape the rabbinic idiom, several of the Maskilim still used the old-style expressions that they condemned.³

As I have pointed out in a previous study of Haskalah, “There was a natural inclination by Maskilim to use the biblical idiom, which they saw as representing pure Hebrew at its best. And indeed, they contrived to apply biblical Hebrew to the epic poem and poetic drama, which revolved in part around biblical themes, and thus succeeded in achieving a harmony between style and content.”⁴

“The utilization of the familiar, conventional idiom, derived from the rich array of sources of the sacred Hebraic cultural heritage led [...] to the creation of the maskilic style known as *melitzah* in its ‘modern’ use.” Its basis may be found in medieval Hebrew poetry, where it is generally defined as euphuism, grandiloquence of inlay style (p. 24).⁵

The term ‘*melitzah*’ is loosely used in the critical literature and in popular discourse to such an extent that it became synonymous with the unique language of the Hebrew Haskalah.

But what exactly is *melitzah* as used in the language of the Maskilim and as defined by them?

The term appears in Haskalah literature in various contexts — from titles of books (*Zeved Hamelitzah* - 1744, *Tzahut Hamelitzah* - 1834, by Zeev Buchner, to *Melitzat Yeshurun* - 1816, by Shlomo Loewisohn, and *Resisei Hamelitzah* – 1821, by David Samośc) to many references throughout the literature, as well as in intensive discussions on language and poetry. Nevertheless, the multiple use of *melitzah* did not contribute to its clear meaning.

³ See discussion in Moshe Pelli, *Bema 'avkei Temurah* [Struggle for Change] (Tel Aviv, 1988), p. 23.

⁴ *Ibid.* However, it should be noted that for their writing in non-belletristic spheres on philosophy, language, education, science, and society, the Maskilim, trained as they were in the philosophical and theological Jewish writings of the Middle Ages, used medieval Hebrew.

⁵ Cited page numbers in parentheses within the text of the chapter refer to the source discussed in that context and cited in a footnote nearby, and so throughout the book.

Nowadays, one may use *melitzah* as a derogatory term. As defined in modern dictionaries and literary lexicons, the modern use of the term suggests a negative connotation, namely, a lofty, bombastic, esoteric, or vague language, which at times employs artificially broken phrases, arbitrarily taken from the Bible. The Gur dictionary of the 1930s has one of its definitions as “empty phrases uttered in a foggy way (in ridicule).”⁶

The New Dictionary by Even Shoshan defines *melitzah* as “bombastic phraseology, scriptural verses and snatches of verses inserted into sentences, high flown language.”⁷ Similar definitions appeared in other dictionaries.⁸

Checking the data base of modern Hebrew literature in the historical dictionary of the Hebrew language at the Academy of the Hebrew Language, in the section of Haskalah, resulted with 409 citations in which the *melitzah* was used not in a negative connotation.⁹ Even in our days the term *melitzah* is used in a positive way, such as in the expression “*Letiferet hamelizah*” (for the ornamentation of the language).¹⁰

A search in some modern dictionaries will also provide examples of other uses of *melitzah*, which are not derogatory. Such is *Otzar Halashon Ha'ivrit* (Treasury of the Hebrew Language) which cites some additional definitions of *melitzah*: “1. An expression of wisdom and proverb [parable], a poetic expression, in similes; 2. A high-flown and ornamental language.”¹¹

In the Sappir Dictionary, which is a more recent publication, the definition is: “A literary expression not used in regular speech — especially for elegance,

⁶ Juda Grasovsky (Gur), *Milon Hasafah Ha'ivrit* [The Dictionary of the Hebrew Language] (Tel Aviv, 1935), p. 538.

⁷ Avraham Even-Shoshan, *Hamilon Hehadash* [The New Dictionary], III (Jerusalem, 1967), p. 1366.

⁸ Yaakov Cenaani, *Otzar Halashon Ha'ivrit* [Treasury of the Hebrew Language], IX (Tel Aviv, 1968), p. 2959: “A bombastic style tending to use snatches of scriptural verses.” And see a similar derogatory use of the term in the following articles: J. Rivlin, “Beit Midrash Shel Yerushalayim” [The Jerusalem Study-House], *Moznayim* [Scale], I (1934), p. 96: “There were ‘authors’ for whom ‘*melitzah*’ was the main thing and who put no thought into it. However, even those who had something to say [...] could not find the correct words for their thoughts, and the *melitzah* so clouded their thinking that one could not tell what they wished to say.” *Melitzah* is also referred to in derogatory terms in Nahum Sokolow, “Magefat Hamelitzah Hanochriyah” [The Plague of the Alien *Melitzah*], *Moznayim*, I, 6 (1933/4), p. 40.

⁹ I would like to express my thanks to Prof. Avraham Tal, the head of the historical dictionary of the Hebrew language and to Mr. Doron Rubinstein, in charge of the modern Hebrew literature section, for their help in providing the data.

¹⁰ See, for example, this use in Hayim Be'er's article in *Devar Hashavu'a* (14 of Heshvan, TSHNA [1990/1]).

¹¹ Cenaani, *Otzar Halashon Ha'ivrit*, IX, p. 2959, but the fourth definition is: “Puffed up style for its use of snatches of verses.”

grandiloquence.”¹²

The classical Ben Yehuda Dictionary of early 20th century does not cite any derogatory meaning of the term, and identifies *melitzah* in biblical literature as “a wisdom phrase used as a simile [proverb] and wit,” and in late literature as “a statement said in pleasant and beautiful order in accordance with the spirit of the language.”¹³

Yet in Azriel Uchmani’s literary lexicon, which does not present the full historical meanings of a literary term but its practical, contemporary use, we find two definitions: “a. in Spanish [Hebrew] literature: rhymed prose in the *piyutim* and *maqamas*. b. a foggy, powerless sentence composed of snatches of verses from the Bible.”¹⁴

Obviously, the writers of Haskalah did not intend any derogatory or disparaging meaning when they used the term *melitzah*.

To track the history of the use of *melitzah*, one should explore its employment as a literary device and its definition in medieval Hebrew poetry:

The Biblical *Shibutz* in Medieval Hebrew Poetry

Scholarly studies of medieval Hebrew poetry discussed and analyzed the use of the biblical *shibutz* (inlay) and the *melitzah*.

Ezra Fleischer, in his studies of the medieval sacred poetry, explained “the stylistic bond between the pre-classical *piyut* and biblical *melitzah*”:

The biblical *shibutz*, i.e., the insertion of fragments of tanachic verses and phrases into the stylistic fabric of a literary work, is one of Hebrew literature’s old and established ornamental devices. There is hardly a period in Hebrew literature that has not ‘inlaid’ biblical citations into its style, some more, some less. The inlay adds prestige to the literary text, enriching it with the accompanying harmonics that the inlaid words bring from their original ‘environment,’ lending it the charm of the unexpected. The hearer is aroused to an appreciation of the writer’s erudition, of his excellent command of the Scriptures and his skill in taking words from another time and place — from another topic even — and welding them so smoothly together with a text being composed in the here and now.¹⁵

Similarly, Dan Pagis, in his study of medieval secular Hebrew poetry,

¹² Eitan Avniel, *Milon Sappir* [Sappir’s Dictionary] (Israel, 1997), p. 554.

¹³ Eliezer Ben Yehuda, *Milon Halashon Ha’ivrit Hayeshanah Vehahadashah* [The Dictionary of the Ancient and Modern Hebrew Language] (Jerusalem-Berlin, 1908–1959), p. 3041.

¹⁴ Azriel Uchmani, *Techanim Vetzurot* [Contents and Forms] (Merḥavyah, 1957), p. 192.

¹⁵ Ezra Fleischer, *Shirat Hakodesh Ha’ivrit Bimei Habeinayim* [Sacred Hebrew Poetry in the Middle Ages] (Jerusalem, 1975), pp. 103–104.

explained the phenomenon of the *shibutz* style as a “consequence both of the biblical revival and of contemporary poetics”:

It is a truism that the Hebrew poetry of medieval Spain utilized not only a biblical vocabulary but also whole verses and parts of verses, integrating them into poetic writings in a new context [...] An inner biblical intertwining is already a feature in the earliest of these Spanish poets, and in some poems the very linguistic fabric is a weave of verses from here and there in Scripture. Now the Bible was an inseparable part of the education of every learned person [*Maskil*]: a snatch of a verse was an allusion to the text in its entirety. Readers could derive a special, sometimes a surprising, flavor from the new knit of well familiar verses and from the new context set up by the poem. An inlay of verses at their best [...] is no mere collection of high-flown, euphuistic quotations but a new and dynamic creation.¹⁶

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The use of the *melitzah* as a derogatory term definitely does not come from scholars of medieval literature, although severe criticism has been lodged for some time by some rabbis and indeed by Maskilim against those *piyutim* that exaggerated in verbose onomatopoeia as in the classical example: “*Atz kotzetz ben kotzetz ketzutei lekatzetz.*”¹⁷

My working hypothesis is that employing the term *melitzah* to imply a negative use of language is a product of the change in attitude toward the Haskalah literature in general and its use of the Hebrew language in particular.

If this is indeed the case, there are a few relevant questions asked:

- What was the meaning of the term *melitzah* during the Haskalah as perceived by the Maskilim themselves, and what was its poetic and literary use in Haskalah literature?
- When did the negative implication of the term emerge and overcame other meanings, and how did it come about?

The *Melitzah* in Modern Scholarship

To address these questions, a brief review of the state of contemporary scholarship on the use of *melitzah* and its definition will be conducted. Regrettably, scholarly discussion of the *melitzah* in the early Haskalah was deficient for some time. This writer has published several papers and a chapter

¹⁶ Dan Pagis, *Hidush Umasoret Beshirat Hahol Ha'ivrit: Sefarad Ve'italiah* [Innovation and Tradition in Secular Hebrew Poetry: Spain and Italy] (Jerusalem, 1976), p 70.

¹⁷ See Moshe Pelli, *Haskalah Umodernism [:] Hathalot Vehemshechim* [Haskalah and Modernity: Beginnings and Continuity] (Israel, 2007), chapter 2, pp. 79–82. The *piyut* was composed by Elazar Hakalir and is said on the Sabbath before Purim.

in a book in Hebrew on the subject, which detailed various definitions and perceptions of the *melitzah* by the early Maskilim.¹⁸ Several scholars, though, have written on the subject matter in the context of Haskalah language or poetry.

Boaz Shahevitch already addressed this topic in his studies of the language of the early Haskalah and Maskilim in the 1960s. Among literary critics, one should mention Dan Miron's in-depth analysis of Abraham Mapu's (1808–1867) use of *melitzah* in mid-nineteenth century, and Bracha Fischler and Iris Parush's study of Shalom Yaakov Abramovich's (1835/6–1917) use of the biblical *shibutz*. Yehuda Friedlander and Uzi Shavit also cited *melitzah* as part of their discussions of Haskalah poetry.

A review of these scholars' discussion on *melitzah* follows.

Shahevitch's definition: Among scholars studying the Hebrew language of the Haskalah, Boaz Shahevitch examined the writings of Naphtali Herz Wessely for his linguistic style and his use of the Hebrew language.¹⁹ As part of his studies, Shahevitch explored the various definitions of *melitzah* in dictionaries and scholarly works and found that the general use of the term is a derogatory one. His conclusion is that as the term developed in our times, the current use of *melitzah* for a non derogatory meaning is an exception. Shahevitch observed that even historians of Hebrew literature such as Lachover and Klausner used the term *melitzah* interchangeably in its different meanings, usually with a derogatory effect.²⁰

He noted that the word originally denoted 'rhetoric' — aesthetic and artistic use of language — but later it "fell into disrepute and acquired a pejorative meaning" to denote a bad use of language. He gave examples of such use of *melitzah* in early Haskalah, citing briefly Wessely, David

¹⁸ Pelli, *Haskalah Umodernism [:] Hathalot Vehemshechim*, chapter V, pp. 208–239; Pelli, *Sugot Vesugyot Besifrut Hahaskalah Ha'ivrit* [Kinds of Genres in Haskalah Literature: Types and Topics] (Tel Aviv, 1999), chapter VII, pp. 227–232.

¹⁹ See Boaz Shahevitch's articles listed in the next two footnotes and a chapter in Shahevitch's dissertation, *Be'ayot Besignon Haprozah Hamasa'it Shel Reisheet Hasifrut Ha'ivrit Hahadashah Al Pi Haprozah Shel R.N.H. Weisel* [Problems in the Essay Prose Style of Early Modern Hebrew Literature, with Reference to the Prose of N. H. Wessely]. Doctoral dissertation, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1963.

²⁰ Boaz Shahevitch, "Arba Leshonot: Iyunim Shel Sifrut Bileshon Hamaskilim Al Pi 'Hame'asef'" [Four Tongues: Literary Studies in the Language of the Maskilim with Reference to 'Hame'asef'] *Molad* [New Moon] (new series), I (2, 1967), pp. 236–242; *idem*, "Mi'ut Panim Veribuy-Panim Badimuy" [The Few-Faceted and the Multi-Faceted in the Figure], *Tarbiz* [Academy] XXXVII (4, 1968), pp. 374–396; *idem*, "Rovdei Otzar Hamilim Be'Divrei Shalom Ve'emet" [Layers of Vocabulary in 'Divrei Shalom Ve'emet' (Words of Peace and Truth)], *Leshonenu* [Our Language], XXXII (1968), pp. 304–307.

Friedrichsfeld, Moses Mendelsson, and Meir Halevi Letteris. Afterwards, he examined the definition of *melitzah* and its attributes in the writings of later scholars.

Shahevitch then proceeded to enumerate all the ‘accusations’ leveled at *melitzah*: that it is verbose, superfluous and redundant, that it is imprecise, a patchwork of verses and snatches of verse, that it is ornate; it employs puns excessively, it cherishes biblical hapax legomena (a word or phrase appearing only once in the bible), it is cliché, it is hollow and bombastic. Shahevitch argued that this long litany of argumentations failed to provide a unique characterization of *melitzah*; and that these faulty qualities are equally applicable to other styles of writing.²¹

In assessing these criticisms of *melitzah*, Shahevitch concluded, that their common denominator is that, in the main, they all relate to excess, or to extreme. Thus, “The verbosity as a quantitative extreme, the *shibutz*—‘inlay’ of biblical verse segments—as an extreme of associations, the ornamental as a qualitative extreme, the use of rare words as an extreme of the unique and the unusual.” The Maskilim employed Hebrew as a language “acquired from the Scriptures,” and were not sensitive enough to distinguish “the levels of words and expressions.”²² Thus, even Shahevitch came to subscribe to the negative concept of *melitzah* as used in the Haskalah literature.

Literary and Haskalah Scholars on the *Melitzah*

Among Haskalah scholars who discussed the concept of *melitzah* was Yehuda Friedlander. He defined *melitzah*, as perceived by the Maskilim, as “a global term for work of literature.” As a consequence to such a generalized definition, he asserted that “poetry is one of the kinds of *melitzah*. *Melitzah* includes rhetoric, essays, letters, etc.”²³

Apparently, following Friedlander, Uzi Shavit, too, understood *melitzah* as “a general term for *belles lettres* and their unique language,”²⁴ yet he expanded the term to include the language of any creative writing. Both Friedlander and

²¹ Shahevitch, “Bein Amur La’amirah: Lemahutah Shel Hamelitzah” [Between Saying and Said: On the Nature of *Melitzah*], *Hasifrut* [Literature], II (3, 1970), pp. 664–666; and compare Shahevitch, “Hamelitzah Mahi?” [What is *Melitzah*?], *Abstracts of the Third World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem, 1965); and Dov Sadan, “Hidush Shesofo Shigrah Keitzad?” [How Can an Innovation Become a Routine?], *Abstracts of the Third World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem, 1965), p. 152.

²² Shahevitch, “Bein Amur La’amirah: Lemahutah Shel Hamelitzah,” *Hasifrut*, II (3, 1970), p. 667.

²³ Yehuda Friedlander, “Tefisat Mahutah Shel Hashirah Bereisheet Sifrut Ha’haskalah Ha’ivrit” [Concept of the Essence of Poetry in the Beginning of Hebrew Haskalah Literature], *Bikoret Ufarshanut* [Criticism and Interpretation], I (1970), p. 56.

²⁴ Uzi Shavit, *Shirah Ve’ideologiah* [Poetry and Ideology] (Tel Aviv, 1987), p. 102.

Shavit were discussing Haskalah poetry and its poetics, and consequently they disregarded certain linguistic aspects of the *melitzah* and probably did not take into consideration some definitions and usage of important Haskalah aestheticians who expressed their ideas about the subject. It appears to me that these scholars' definition of *melitzah* does not follow the Maskilim's definitions or to its use in their writings.

Dan Miron: Dan Miron is one of the few modern literary critics who have addressed the subject of inlaid *melitzah* in Haskalah literature from a literary angle. In his in-depth discussion of the style of Abraham Mapu, he explained the "art of *melitzah*." Miron used such terms as "inlaid style," "*melitzah* style" and "*melitzah*" which relate to our discussion.

He explained that the sweeping dismissals of the *melitzah* of the Haskalah were necessary and understandable in their time, within the context of a literary reevaluation of the poetics of prose (referring to S. Y. Abramovich) and of poetry (H. N. Bialik). He argued that the extreme negative generalities espoused by our literary thinking toward the literature of *melitzah* were required at that time as part of the revamping of the concept of literature. However,

the entrenchment of such views in criticism and in routine exposition of the history of literature up to our times betokens a laziness of thought and a lack of sensitivity and understanding for our literary heritage. The inlay style, like any of the other devices of *melitzah* literature, is not intrinsically worthless; only its bad examples [...] are worthless [...]. The literary taste evident in the inlay style is not inferior but merely different from our own conventional taste. The aesthetic-poetic notions upon which it rests do not conform to the notions on which [...] our own literary judgment is based.²⁵

Within the framework of the Maskilim's *melitzah* style there are up-and-down achievements and failures, as in more modern stylistic frameworks. "Thus, the total rejection of the maskilic style of the *shibutz* as a *melitzah* style is indicative of a stylistic narrow-mindedness such as the lack of stylistic criteria."²⁶

Consequently, Miron defined the *shibutz* style (as compared to the 'free' poetic style as presented by Bialik) as "a system of linguistic connective practices, which seeks to convey a certain expressive meaning by combining linguistic units — perceived as pre-constructed and as possessing a linguistic-aesthetic value of their own — without having a link between these units and their intended application to the contextual meaning which they affect.

"Most characteristic of the Hebrew inlay style is the use of phrases from sacred texts, particularly the Tanach, as fixed, completed units which the author

²⁵ Dan Miron, *Bein Hazon Le'emet* [Between Vision and Truth] (Jerusalem, 1979), pp.32–33.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

may only string together in different orders but may not radically alter” (pp. 28–29).

Miron proposed utilizing the analysis of Mapu’s writings “as point of departure for a reexamination” of “the essential quality and artistic value of the *melitzah*.” In a meticulously detailed presentation, he demonstrated the sophisticated art of Mapu’s *melitzah* and its connection to the system of structures running throughout his work. Miron argued that “in order to comprehend the art of the *melitzah*, one must be trained to listen to the stereophony of the language.” Sometimes, indeed, “the polyphony of the *shibutz* style expands [...] from stereophonic to triphonic or even multiphonic effect” (p. 33). He considered Mapu’s style to be “an exquisite *shibutz* style [...] which attaches parts of verses in a delicate, rich and interesting suggestive resonance.”²⁷

Evidently, Miron’s analysis is indicative of “the artisitic essence and the virtuosity possibilities of the *melitzah*.²⁸ The term ‘*shibutz* style’ in Miron’s usage relates to the ways the *melitzah* is used in writing.

Fischler, Parush: Among scholars who studied the *melitzah* we should note Bracha Fischler and Iris Parush in their probe into Abramovich’s biblical *shibutz*. In a detailed and comprehensive article they showed Abramovich’s dexterity and skill in his use of the biblical *shibutz*. Abramovich chose the biblical *melitzah* intentionally in his “desire to return to the classical language because of its sacredness, its prestige, its sublimity and its national importance.”²⁹ It was the authors’ intention to show the phenomenon of the *shibutz* as “an unavoidable phase in the development of Hebrew as a modern written language” (p. 242).

It should be noted that both Miron and Fischler and Parush demonstrated the use of *melitzah* in the later phases of the Haskalah in the second half of the nineteenth century.

The *Melitzah* in the Writings of Early Haskalah: *Nahal Habesor*

In light of the lack of clarity of the *melitzah* concept and its use in the early Haskalah in its linguistic and literary contexts, it is worthwhile to explore this subject thoroughly in the writings of the thinkers and aestheticians who had

²⁷ Dan Miron, “Arba He’arot Lete’urei Hateva Be’ha’avot Vehabanim’ Le’Abramovich” [Four Notes on the Landscape Description in Abramovich’s ‘Ha’avot Vehabanim’], *Moznayim* [Scale], XXVIII (4, Adar 1969), p. 257.

²⁸ Miron, *Bein Hazon Le’emet*, p. 33.

²⁹ Bracha Fischler and Iris Parush, “Hashibutz Hamikra’i Kistandard Beinayim [:] Iyun Bahakdamot ‘Sefer Toldot Hateva’ Me’et S. Y. Abramovich” [The Biblical *Shibutz* as an Interim Standard: A Study in the Introductions to ‘Sefer Toldot Hateva’ by S. Y. Abramovich], *Shai Lehadasah* [A Present to Hadasah] (Beer Sheva, 1997), pp. 237–262; the quotation is on p. 241.

shaped and reflected the poetics of the early Haskalah literature.

An attempt will be made to trace the development of the *melitzah* phenomenon in the early Haskalah while noting the changes that occurred in its perception by later Maskilim. Likewise, we will attempt to trace the process in which a rhetorical device for enhancing the beauty of language turned into a pejorative at the end of the Haskalah period. I will not deal with the subject of poetry and its poetics in the context of *melitzah*, which I dwelled on elsewhere.³⁰

Nahal Habesor: A reliable source for the use of the *melitzah* and its definition in the early Haskalah is found in *Hame'asef*, the Haskalah journal. The prospectus of *Hame'asef*, *Nahal Habesor* (The Brook 'Besor,' or Good Tidings) (1783), where the editors announced their plans for the forthcoming monthly *Hame'asef*, its content and style, referred several times to the term *melitzah*. An analysis of its use by the editors in the prospectus indicated that *melitzah* was meant to be 'rhetoric.'³¹ Adding the adjective 'tzahah' (pure, clear) to *melitzah* (*melitzah tzahah*), as further used by the editors of *Hame'asef*, would indicate 'a rhetorical expression' of a lofty language.³² Importantly, the rhetorical language in the editors' definition is related to the proper use of grammar, which facilitates clear thinking and clear speaking, as expounded in the classical works on rhetoric.³³

N. H. Wessely: Naphtali Herz Wessely, philologist, Bible commentator and poet, was one of the first Maskilim in Germany who dealt with the meaning of words and especially the difference between synonyms. His definitions varied from an early definition (1765) which treated language and *melitzah* as synonyms, referring to 'expression,' or any type of speech.³⁴ Wessely also understood the term *melitzah* as related to the biblical term 'melitz,' that is, a translator, interpreter (Genesis 42: 23). Thus, *melitzah*, to him, is any speech or utterance in which one attempts to 'translate' his thoughts into words and communicate with his listener.³⁵ *Melitzah*, then, does not have to be a lofty

³⁰ Moshe Pelli, *Dor Hame'asim Beshahar Hahaskalah* [The Circle of *Hame'asef*'s Writers at the Dawn of Haskalah] (Israel, 2001), chapter I on poetry, pp. 23–72.

³¹ *Nahal Habesor* [The Brook 'Besor,' or Good Tidings], bound with *Hame'asef*, I (1783/4), p. 2. Cf. Jacob Klatzkin, *Otzar Hamunahim Haphilosophiyim* [Treasury of Philosophical Terms], III (Berlin, 1928), p. 240.

³² *Nahal Habesor*, p. 12.

³³ As expounded in Juda Messer Leon's *Nofet Tzufim* [The Book of Honeycomb] (Mantoba, 1477), section one, chapter one, unpaginated, manuscript found at the Hebrew Union College Library in Cincinnati. See also Moshe Hayim Luzzatto, *Leshon Limudim* [A Skilled Language] (Israel, 1950?; first published in 1727), A. M. Habermann's edition, p. 13.

³⁴ N. H. Wessely, "Petihat Hamehaber" [Author's Preface], *Levanon* [Lebanon] (Amsterdam, 1765), p. 6a.

³⁵ N. H. Wessely, *Masechet Avot* [Tractate Avot (Ethics of the Fathers)] with the commentary "Yen Levanon" [Wine of Lebanon] (Berlin, 1775), p. 10.

language.

Isaac Satanow: Isaac Satanow (1732–1804), who has mastered several literary genres, dealt, like Wessely, in topics related to the Hebrew language and poetry, and he also offered his definition of *melitzah*. Like Wessely, he traced the root of the term to the biblical word ‘*meletz*,’ which implies sweetness, and in the language context it refers to the artistic, aesthetic and figurative aspect of an expression.³⁶

Satanow then analyzed the *melitzah* from three aspects: its matter should be based on the purity of the language, adhering to one layer of the Hebrew language, rather than mixing talmudic and biblical styles, and following the grammar properly. From the point of view of form, the *melitzah* has to be of pure idea, arranged according to the aesthetics of the language. From the point of view of purpose: it has to aim at correcting the individual’s character and improving his manners, inner qualities and correct thinking (p. 4a).

Moses Mendelssohn: The philosopher, Bible commentator, and exemplary figure of the Haskalah, Moses Mendelssohn contributed his definition of *melitzah* which is similar to that of Satanow. According to him, *melitzah* is any pleasant utterance which affects the listener and impacts him inwardly.³⁷ The quality of the *melitzah* in its ability to affect the soul of the reader is underscored by Mendelssohn. Thus, in his view, *melitzah* is a rhetorical expression.³⁸

Isaac Euchel: Following in Mendelssohn’s footsteps in the *Be’ur*, several Maskilim addressed the issue of *melitzah* in the commentaries and introductions to their editions of the books of the Hebrew Bible. Isaac Euchel (1756–1804), the editor of *Hame’asef*, biographer, Bible commentator and an organizer of the Haskalah, in his introduction to *Mishlei*, apparently accepted Mendelssohn’s concept of *melitzah*, which he identified as “rhetoric.” It “includes all kinds of speech in accordance with the rules of the impact [on the listener], the arranged order, and pleasantness established by the theoreticians of this art.”³⁹ He explained that *melitzah* is “eloquence,” namely rhetoric, which may include poetry, proverbs (or similes), and wit (p. 5). In his other use of *melitzah*, it seems that he referred to any kind of figurative language (pp. 9, 10–13).

Joel Brill: The Bible commentator, linguist and fable writer Joel Brill, too,

³⁶ Isaac Satanow, “Melechet Hashir” [The Art of the Poem], *Sefer Hahizayon* [Book of Vision] (Berlin, 1775), p. 4a.

³⁷ Shlomo Dubno, *Alim Litrusah* [Leaves for Healing] (Amsterdam, 1778), p. 6b, citing Mendelssohn. See also, *Netivot Hashalom* [Paths of Peace], *Sefer Bamidbar* [Numbers], Moses Mendelssohn, ed., IV (Berlin, 1783), p. 95a.

³⁸ See, for example, *Kohelet Musar* [Preacher of Morals] (1750?), section II, p. 3; Moses Mendelssohn, *Or Linetivah* [Light for Path] (Berlin, 1783), p. 29 (pagination added).

³⁹ Itzik Euchel, “Hakdama Umevo Hasefer” [Preface and Introduction of the Book], *Mishlei* [Proverbs] (Berlin, 1790), p. 5 (my pagination).

contributed to the discussion about the *melitzah* in his introduction to the Book of Psalms published in 1791.⁴⁰ According to his definition, *melitzah* is a amalgamation of the rational speech that is based on the rules of logic. It facilitates an exchange of ideas and thoughts, and speech which affects feelings and emotions, where one's mental faculties affect intrinsically someone else's (p. 5). In other words, the *melitzah* seems to be a combination of poetics and rhetoric; it is tied directly to aesthetics in its ability to impact one's emotions; it unites the beautiful and the sublime into one.

Juda Leib Ben Zeev: The linguist, lexicographer, and biblical scholar Juda Leib Ben Zeev (1764–1811) discussed the *melitzah* in general and the biblical *melitzah* in particular. He defined the *melitzah* as a lofty speech⁴¹ and he further explained the term as related to figurative language.⁴² In his biblical definition, he identified the term as linked to sweetness and pleasantness, similar to Satanow's definition.

David Friedrichsfeld: The Amsterdam Maskil David Friedrichsfeld (1755–1810) engaged in the definition of aesthetics in the second part of his biography of Wessely, *Zecher Tzadik* (Commemoration of a Righteous Man), in 1809.⁴³ He conceived of *melitzah* as an artistic and poetic expression and use of figurative language. Friedrichsfeld divided language into two: the language of speech and narrative, which is the language spoken by the people, namely, prose, and the second, which is the language of *melitzah* and the poem, namely, "poetry." The first is the language of rationality, and the second is the language of imagination.

Shlomo Loewisohn: Shlomo Loewisohn (1789–1821), theoretician of aesthetics and poetics, wrote a whole book in 1816 which is devoted to the notion of *melitzah*. It is *Melitzat Yeshurun* (The Rhetoric of Jeshurun) in which he defined *melitzah* as rhetoric or poetics. It is conceived as the poetics of the sublime or the rhetoric of the sublime.⁴⁴ Concurrently, he identified *melitzah* as figurative poetics.

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These early Hebrew Maskilim described their views of the essence of *melitzah* as perceived at this early stage of Haskalah. In general, it seems that *melitzah* is understood as rhetoric, as a rhetorical expression, and at times, as poetics.

Melitzah in the writings of Malbim: It will be interesting to compare these definitions by the Maskilim to the clear explanation of the nineteenth-century

⁴⁰ Joel Brill, *Sefer Zmirot Israel* [The Book of the Hymns of Israel] (Berlin, 1791).

⁴¹ Juda Leib Ben Zeev, *Talmud Lashon Ivri* [Learning the Hebrew Language] (Vienna, 1827; first edition: 1796), p. 184a, in a footnote.

⁴² Juda Leib Ben Zeev, *Mavo El Mikra'ei Kodesh* [Introduction to the Holy Scriptures] (Vienna, 1810), p. 24b.

⁴³ David Friedrichsfeld, *Zecher Tzadik* [Commemoration of a Righteous Man] (Amsterdam, 1809), p. 50.

⁴⁴ Shlomo Loewisohn, *Melitzat Yeshurun* [The Rhetoric of Jeshurun] (Vienna, 1816).

traditional Bible commentator Rabbi Meir Leibush ben Yehiel, known as Malbim. In his view, the word ‘*melitz*’ refers to an intermediary between two people relating one’s ideas to his listener who does not understand his language.⁴⁵ He based his view on the verse in Genesis where the word ‘*melitz*’ means ‘translator’ or ‘interpreter’ (Genesis 42: 23). Thus, Malbim explained *melitzah* as the inner meaning of a word or concept which is hidden under external attire signifying sublime matters and lofty figurative language. He applied his definition to the use in the Bible. *Melitzah* is then the hidden meaning which is embodied in a lofty figurative expression.

While discussing the *melitzah* and its use, the Maskilim, at this early stage, warned against its possible abuse. The authors of *Nahal Habesor* warned of the misuse of the *melitzah* by fusing parts of different sources indiscriminately, such as verses from the Bible with talmudic phrases, quotes from the *Zohar* with borrowing from medieval commentaries. Such a confusing mixture of different styles and languages (Hebrew and Aramaic) is to be avoided.⁴⁶

Likewise, Joel Brill alerted his readers of misuse of *melitzah*, which he referred to as “corrupting the *melitzah*. ” Those corruptors think that quoting different biblical prophets is *melitzah*; however, by doing so, they in effect employ different styles, for each prophet has his own unique style. They exaggerate in their use of play on words, thus their language is confused and confusing. Use of vague and incoherent references, too, is not *melitzot*.⁴⁷

Why the Use of *Melitzah*?

The *melitzah* occupied an important place in the poetics of the Haskalah; theoreticians dealt with its definition, and poets and authors applied the *melitzah* style and the *shibutz* in their writing.

The question arises as to what prompted the Maskilim to adopt this particular style — according to their own definitions — in their writings?

The explanation may be found in the writings of those theoreticians who praised the unique qualities of biblical poetry. Mendelssohn was one of the first Maskilim in Germany who analyzed the attributes of biblical poetry in his introduction to The Song of Moses in Exodus.⁴⁸ He explained that it is his purpose to show that biblical poetry is much superior to and has an advantage over any of the best secular poetry in beauty and splendor.

Likewise Wessely, in his introduction to his *Shirei Tiferet* (Songs of

⁴⁵ Malbim, Meir Leibush ben Yehiel Michal, *Hacarmel* (Jerusalem, 1998), pp. 198a-b.

⁴⁶ *Nahal Habesor*, p. 12.

⁴⁷ Brill, *Sefer Zmirot Israel*, pp. 8a-b.

⁴⁸ *Netivot Hashalom, Sefer Shmot* [Exodus], II, pp. 62a–66b, Mendelssohn’s discussion and commentary on שיר הים (Shirat Hayam) — The Song of Moses — in Exodus.

Glory), the epic poetry of the Haskalah, accepted Mendelssohn's position in this regard and he, too, established that the religious poetry in the Bible does have its equal in any existing or even future poetry.⁴⁹

Shlomo Loewisoohn who studied the poetics of the Bible in his *Melitzat Yeshurun* also praised the quality of biblical poetry which scholars of other nations glorified beyond the writing of their own poets.⁵⁰

The appreciation of the Hebrew Bible as the zenith of creativity far surpassing the creative works of Western culture in the eyes of the greatest poets and thinkers of the Enlightenment raised the national pride of the early Haskalah writers and contributed to a reorientation of their cultural, spiritual and poetic creativity toward the literature of the Hebrew Bible.⁵¹

Thus, the Maskilim resorted to the use of the lofty *shibutz* style that required a profound erudition on the part of the writer and likewise a reading in depth on the part of the reader. He is engaged in an artistic play to decipher the hidden allusions of the text while the known biblical text serves as an intertextual background and as reference for the enrichment of the work.

It should be noted that the *melitzic shibutz* varies in kind. Pagis, for example, discerned several kinds of the medieval *shibutz*, which may contribute to the understanding of the complexity of the maskilic *shibutz*.

Pagis: Types of medieval shibutz: Pagis distinguished three types of medieval *shibutz* saying that *melitzic shibutz* inlays are not all of a kind.⁵² His distinctions can be called upon in examining the *shibutz* of the Haskalah:

“(a) A neutral *shibutz*, primarily linguistic in function” — using words, phrases and bits of verses without allusion to the tanachic context (p.17);

“(b) A *shibutz* that acts primarily via knowledge of the source-text, though it can in fact be self-contained” (p. 72). As an example: the inlay that undergoes meaning-shift — not only divorcing the source-verse from its original context but changing the meaning of the words, satirically or sarcastically on occasions (p. 73);

“(c) An inlay or system of inlays acting on the whole, or the major portion of the poem as a conceptual or descriptive center, or as part of its inner structure” (p. 75).

In the last two types, the use of the biblical *melitzah* resorts to the scriptural context to some extent, thus the referenced biblical text serves as a necessary subtext in the background of the modern text.

It should be emphasized that a Haskalah text in a *melitzah* style — such as the one to be analyzed in the present study — depends for its accurate reading and comprehension upon the reader. One of the problems in reading a Haskalah

⁴⁹ Naphtali Herz Wessely, *Shirei Tiferet* [Songs of Glory] (Prague, 1809), p. 9 (my pagination), first and partial edition appeared in 1789.

⁵⁰ Loewisoohn, *Melitzat Yeshurun*, p. 1, in the introduction.

⁵¹ See references in German literature in Moshe Pelli, *Dor Hame'asfim Beshahar Hahaskalah*, pp. 35–37.

⁵² Pagis, *Hidush Umasoret Beshirat Hahol Ha'ivrit: Sefarad Ve'italiah*.

text today resides not in the text itself but in today's Hebrew reader, who connects differently to the textual sources than did the Haskalah readership. Educators are duty-bound to be aware of this problem when teaching the literature of the Haskalah and to draw the student's attention to the sources underlying the text. Needless to say, that task is as important as it is difficult—and one that confronts anyone making a serious study of Hebrew literature through the ages, modern literature included.

With the use of the biblical *melitzah*, the biblical text being alluded to may sometimes become a subtext underlying the modern story. Where compatible with the event or description, it contributes to them and enriches them with the original substance and colors. However, where incompatible with the modern story, it creates an ironic contrast, potentially enriching it in terms of irony. Of course, incompatible *melitzah* can cause incongruity between the surface text and the (biblical) text being alluded to, thus creating a tension which the author had not intended (assuming that we can monitor such intent, or that it is the critic's role to point it out) and which does not enrich the text. This would be an unsuccessful use of *melitzah*.

Shmuel Romanelli's Use of *Melitzah*

Following the theoretical discussion so far, it will be worthwhile to explore the actual practice of the *melitzah* in the writings of a number of early Hebrew Haskalah authors, with particular emphasis on Shmuel Romanelli's (1757–1814) *Masa Ba'rav* (Travail in an Arab Land, 1792), written as a travelogue. Romanelli, an Italian poet, described his real-life journey to North Africa and his four year sojourn there in rich prose, which exhibited his mastery of Hebrew. The study exemplifies Romanelli's use of language and his relying on biblical texts for his *shibutz*-like *melitzah*. It is part of a broader analysis of Romanelli's book in the genre of the travelogue in the Hebrew Haskalah.⁵³

The passage selected for analysis is Romanelli's description of a break for lunch during a journey in Morocco:

The time: *vayehi hashemesh el mahatzit hayom* (and the sun was at midday)

The event: *vaneshev le'echol lehem* (and we sat to eat bread)

The location: *bine'ot deshe tahat tze'elei atzei hasadeh el michal mayim*

⁵³ Moshe Pelli, *Sugot Vesugot Besifrut Hahaskalah Ha'ivrit*, chapter VII, pp. 227–232; Pelli, "Sifrut Hamasa'ot Kesugah Sifrut Bahaskalah Ha'ivrit: 'Masa Ba'rav' Lishmuel Romanelli" [The Travelogue as a Literary Genre in the Hebrew Enlightenment: Shmuel Romanelli's 'Masa Ba'rav'], in Stanley Nash, ed., *Migvan: Mehkarim Basifrut Ha'ivrit Uvegiluyeha Ha'amerikaniyim* [Spectrum: Studies in Hebrew Literature and Its American Manifestations] (Lod, 1988), pp. 299–321); Pelli, "Tefisat Hamelitzah Bereisheet Sifrut Hahaskalah Ha'ivrit" [The Concept of *Melitzah* in Early Hebrew Haskalah Literature], *Lashon Ve'ivrit* [Language and Hebrew], VIII (June 1991), pp. 31–48.

hanigarim balat uvenahamat hesed (in green pastures under the boughs of the trees of the field by a brook of water flowing gently with a kindly murmur).

Setting the table: *hamelitz riped smichah al hehatzir* (the interpreter spread a blanket on the grass),

The meal: *vayichreh lanu kerah makolet mibeto dei hashiv et nafshenu* (and he set out a feast for us of food from his home, sufficient to restore our souls [to revive us]).⁵⁴

Reviewing this description, it is noted that Romanelli employed conventional scriptural imagery and expressions to convey his experiences and impressions. He definitely did not use an arbitrary or haphazard snatches of biblical verses, but a deliberate use of fragments of verses inlaid artistically in order to enrich the description. Here is an analysis of Romanelli's description and use of his biblical *melitzah*:

"vayehi hashemesh el mahatzit hayom" (and the sun was at midday)

Instead of saying in the elevated literary style current today "amda hamah be'emtza haraki'a" (the sun stood in the middle of the sky), Romanelli borrowed a biblical expression "vayehi hashemesh" (and the sun was...) which is taken from the verse "vayehi hashemesh lavo vetardemah naflah al avram" (As the sun was about to set, a deep sleep fell upon Abram), in Genesis 15: 12.⁵⁵ And he transferred it to the situation described in his story, combining it at the same time with the expression "mahatzit hayom" (midday), drawn from Nehemiah 8: 3: "min ha'or ad mahatzit hayom" (from the first light until midday). The two inlaid expressions are tied together by the preposition "el." Romanelli has changed the sense of the first sentence and omitted the verb 'bo' ("lavo"), which in collocation with 'the sun' denotes 'setting,' and has thus broken down the original biblical meaning, fashioning it into a different and original sense for his depiction.

Nonetheless, he has left the reader to infer an omitted verb 'ba'ah' — though with a change in its meaning — from the tie-in with the original verse, as if saying: "vayehi hashemesh ba'ah el mahatzit hayom" (and the sun was coming to midday). The usage 'vayehi... el' is generally found in the Bible as a linguistic convention indicating an opening to a prophecy, such as "vayehi devar YHVH el..." (and the word of the Lord came to...), and the basic sentence structure of verb, noun, preposition has to an extent been preserved here too.

⁵⁴ Shmuel Romanelli, *Masa Ba'rav* [Travail in an Arab Land] (Berlin, 1792), p. 3, and : Dorot edition (Jerusalem, 1968), p. 26.

⁵⁵ Similarly, Genesis 15: 17: "**vayehi hashemesh ba'ah va'alatah hayah**" (And it came to pass that when the sun set and it was very dark). Bold type in the quotations denotes the loan material here and elsewhere in the footnotes. Translations are mostly based on the JPS Tanakh.

“vaneshev le’echol lehem” (and we sat to eat bread)

The continuation of the sentence “*vaneshev le’echol lehem*” appears to be founded on the verse “*hu yeshev bo le’echol lehem*” (he shall sit in it to eat bread), Ezekiel 44: 3, with a change in person and with the conversive *vav* common in similar cases (“*vayeshev hamelech al halehem le’echol*” — and the king sat down to eat meal, I Samuel 20: 24; or: “*le’echol lehem im hoten moshe*” — to eat bread with Moses’s father-in-law, Exodus 18: 12).

Romanelli’s language, while seemingly high as compared to other such maskilic description, would appear economical and matter-of-factly, and functions well in supplying the basic information about the meal.

“bine’ot deshe tahat tze’elei atzei hasadeh” (in green pastures under the boughs of the trees of the field)

This sentence, depicting the location, stitches together pieces of verse that are well-suited to the description: “*bine’ot deshe*” is based on the verse “*bine’ot deshe yarbitzeni*” (he makes me lie down in green pastures), Psalms 23: 2, minus the verb. Note that for readers conversant with the Bible, its style and its phraseology, both during the Haskalah and in our own day, the idyllic tanachic image conjures up by the underlying original “*bine’ot deshe yarbitzeni*” and the sequel (not mentioned here) “*al mei menuhot yenahaleni*” (he leads me beside the still waters) infuses its calm into Romanelli’s modern tableau. By using a scriptural verse that also features in the prayers,⁵⁶ he reinforced the contextual-tanachic allusion of the *shibutz*.

“tahat tze’elei” (under the boughs of...)

The description of the location is based on an original “*tahat tze’elim yishkav*” (KJV: he lieth under the shady trees; NEB: under the thorny lotus he lies; JPS: He lies down beneath the lotuses), in Job 40: 21, minus the verb, as the author is depicting the place, and with the noun *tze’elim* switched into the construct form.⁵⁷ The rare use of the name of a shrub or tree, thus called originally because its boughs cast shade (*tzel*), in the sense of ‘bough,’ serves to hark back to the scriptural source of this tree’s name and its meaning, ‘caster of shade.’ Furthermore, the use *tze’elei* adds a homophonous quality and a musical sound that connote the desired image of ‘shade.’

tze’elim has been made construct to *atzei hasadeh*, the trees of the field, derived from Isaiah 55: 12: “*vechol atzei hasadeh yimha ‘u chaf*” (and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands), *et passim*,⁵⁸ transposed here minus the

⁵⁶ In *Kabalat Shabat* (Sabbath Eve Service) of the Sefard rite and after Washing of the Hands in Hasidic custom.

⁵⁷ In the next verse, Job 40: 22, it reads “*yesukuhu tze’elim tzilelo, yesubuhu arvei-nahal*” (The shady trees cover [or: lotuses embower] him with their shade; the willows of the brook surround him).

⁵⁸ Ezekiel 17: 24: “*veyad’u kol atzei hasadeh*” (and all the trees of the field shall know), *et passim*.

word ‘vechol’ and the verb ‘yimha’u.’

“el michal mayim hanigarim balat uvenahamat hesed” (by a brook of water flowing gently with a kindly murmur)

The preposition ‘el’ is used here meaning ‘by’ (e.g. “vayehi hem yoshvim el hashulhan” — as they sat at the table, I Kings 13: 20). “michal mayim” (brook of water) is taken from II Samuel 17: 20: “avrū michal hamayim” (they had crossed over the brook of water), stitched together with “mayim nigarim” (flowing water), based on “ki mot namut vechamayim hanigarim artzah” (for we must all die; we are like water that is poured out on the ground), II Samuel 14: 14. The two turns of phrase are thus interwoven by use of the shared word *mayim*, to form an ‘original’ inlaid *melitzah*. The adverb *balat* is not used biblically of water, and figures in Judges 4: 21: “vatavo elav balat” (and she approached him stealthily); it has been revamped to mean ‘quietly, slowly, gently.’

The expression *nahamat hesed* (a kindly murmur) is apparently an innovation of Romanelli’s, based perhaps on “kenahamat yam” (like the roaring of the sea), Isaiah 5: 30, or “minahamat libi” (because of the disquietness of my heart; or: JPS: because of the turmoil in my mind), Psalms 38: 9. The construction ‘... *hesed*’ being patterned after “ve’ahavat *hesed*” (and to love kindness), Micah 6: 8. Innovation is achieved by replacing *ahavat* with *nahamat*, identical in vocalization and rhythm, while preserving the internal syllabic vocalization a-a-at.

“hamelitz riped smichah al heḥatzir” (the interpreter spread a blanket on the grass)

This sentence appears altogether modern, with none of the direct tanachic turns of phrase of scriptural references. Particularly noticeable is the absence of the conversive *vav*. Nonetheless, the tanachic connection is there, fairly witty and sophisticated. The author is relying on the reader to trace the alluded biblical reference of the expression by making the association between the verb *riped*, spread, and the noun *smichah*, blanket, by reference to the verse “samchuni ba’ashishot rapduni batapuḥim” (stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples; or, JPS: sustain me with raisin cakes, refresh me with apples), Song of Songs 2: 5. In the source-text the verbs *simech* and *riped* are in complementary parallelism. The author is counting on this parallel and on the reader’s ability to spot the wit and novelty in the inlaid *melitzah*. The term ‘*hamelitz*’ is biblical (Genesis 42: 23) and it is used here in its biblical meaning — the interpreter.

The phrase *al heḥatzir*, on the grass, is borrowed from the biblical word that frequently denotes wild grass (but not specifically dry), e.g. “matzmiah hatzir labehemah ve’esev la’avodat ha’adam” (you make the grass grow for the cattle, and herbage for man’s labor), Psalms 104: 14.

“vayichreh lanu kerah makolet mibeto dei hashiv et nafshenu” (and he set out a feast for us of food from his home, sufficient to restore our souls [to revive us])

It may be supposed that the author had some difficulty getting Scripture to yield a description of picnic preparations, and therefore went for a description of the repast itself. *vayichreh lanu kerah*, based on “*vayichreh lahem kerah gedolah*” (and he prepared a lavish feast for them), II Kings 6: 23, changing the suffix in *lahem* to suit the tale and dropping the inappropriate adjective *gedolah*.

makolet mibeto follows the pattern of “*makolet leveto*” (food [provisions] for his household), I Kings 5: 25, with a change of preposition. *dei hashiv* is given on the basis of the verse “*ve’im lo matz’ah yado dei hashiv lo*” (but if he lacks sufficient means to recover it), Leviticus 25: 28, while the expression *hashiv et nafshenu* rests upon “*lehashiv nafsho*” (to bring back his soul; or: to bring him back), Job 33: 30, in line with the story and with added *et*, the two expressions being stitched together to form a blend.

Romanelli’s innovation lies in blending two biblical expressions sharing the same link-word, to form a turn of phrase with an altogether biblical ring about it.

The Quality of Shmuel Romanelli’s *Melitzah*

In general terms, the writer employing a *melitzah* is rewriting his sentences on the basis of established biblical structures. At times, he may sway from the original verse but adhere to the infrastructure of the biblical linguistic patterns. He may merge sentences by inserting his own prepositions, or remove verbs from the original biblical verse in order to conform to the modern text. He also may enrich the overall image by using the original biblical words in a different meaning. He innovates ‘original’ *shibutz*-like *melitzot* by merging a word common to the two parts of a sentence, or by stitching a two-word expression patterned on a biblical grammatical format. The result is an ‘original’ ‘biblical’ *melitzic shibutz* that is not found in the Bible. Thus the ‘*melitz*’ — here the author of the *melitzah* — ‘spreads’ the linguistic ‘blanket,’ to use one of Romanelli’s *melitzot*, and creates witty and intriguing *melitzah*.

When weighing Romanelli’s use of biblical language, one should note that even though it tends to present generalities of the description and is ill-designed for self-expression and unsuited to relay the unique personal experience of the writer, it nevertheless enjoys an advantage in its use. The reader is drawn to an involvement in the events described and becomes a participant in it by the use of the familiar biblical text.

The compositional technique of the inlaid *melitzah* works to create a bond between author and reader through the game of spotting sources and uncovering the way they have been reworked and recast. Yet this type of generalization may result in loss of detail, superficial description and lack of a concrete sense of happenings and places. Thus, routinely: lunch is at *mahatzit*

hayom (in the middle of the day), a repast is *vaneshev le'echol lehem* (and we sat to eat bread), a picnic takes place on the grass and under the shades of trees.

Even the picture of a flowing brook has a conventional look about it, as in the contemporary romance or idyllic tableau, although Romanelli's linguistic mode of expression is particularly lofty in the use of biblical hapax legomena, unique phrases that appear only once in the Bible. Such are *michal hamayim*, 'the brook of water,' *balat*, 'gently,' *kerah*, 'food,' *makolet*, 'provisions.' He also created newly blended phrases, such as *hanigarim balat*, 'flowing gently,' *uvanahamat hesed*, 'and with a kindly murmur.'

The description of the blanket appears matter-of-factly at the picnic, with none of the tanachic linguistic routine — perhaps owing to its 'modern' character — aside from Romanelli's aforementioned innovation (?) of the expression *riped smichah*, 'spread a blanket.'

On the other hand, the repast vouchsafes us nothing concerning what they ate, and how much or how they ate. The generality or abstraction, *karah kerah*, 'prepared food,' 'covers' for all possibilities and fills the gap. It should be noted, however, that even Euchel's travelogue (cited below) does not go into the details of a meal.

This meager depiction of food may be explained that, in accordance with the conventions of the genre, writers of travelogues tended generally to refrain from mentioning topics related to eating and sleeping.⁵⁹

It is interesting to note that the idyllic portrait of the surroundings occupies a respectable portion of the passage concerned: Two out of six sentences, thirteen out of thirty-four words, are devoted to landscape depiction. Note that scenery and landscape serve as indirect characterization for the figures in the narrative while the idyllic picture reflects their mood. The emphasis on nature and its tranquility marks the Haskalah's Rousseau-esque trend of 'back to nature,' far from the tumult of civilization.

Additional insight into Romanelli's way with biblical *shibutz* inlays may be gained by making comparisons with similar descriptions of luncheons in the language of the early Haskalah and in the Hebrew and non-Hebrew travelogues.

In the fable-like idyll "Gideon Haro'eh" (Gideon the Shepherd), published in the periodical *Hame'asef*, Hayim Cöslin (? –1832) used an economical Scripture-based style to depict lunch as follows:

"vayehi be'et hatzohorayim ve'ehav yashvu le'echol velishtot" (*and it came to pass at noon time that his brothers sat down to eat and drink*).⁶⁰

Notice that the time is specified here with none of the graphic quality

⁵⁹ Charles L. Batten, Jr., *Pleasurable Instruction* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1978), p. 15, dicussing Joseph Edison who refrained from writing on food and sleep.

⁶⁰ H...K. [Hayim Cöslin], "Gideon Haro'eh" [Gideon the Shepherd], *Hame'asef*, II (1785), p. 21.

found in Romanelli, who described midday with an image of the sun. The meal, too, is conveyed in generalities, using the verbs *yashav*, ‘sat,’ and *achal*, ‘ate,’ plus the verb *shatah*, ‘drank,’ not found in Romanelli. Of course, it is a brief idyll which is limited in narrative scope and the emphasis is on the aim of a fable — to teach a moral, rather than on the description.

Similar method of conveying time is to be found in “*Meshal Hasheleg, Ha’adamah Vehanahar*” (The Fable of the Snow, the Earth, and the River), published in the same issue of *Hame’asef*:

vayehi le’et hatzohorayim vahashemesh yatzah al ha’aretz” (and it came to pass at noon time that the sun came out upon the earth).⁶¹

Rather than specifying the hour, the author uses a conventional figure of time, cited as “at about noon time” (*le’et*) whereas Cöslin wrote more exactly “at noon time” (*be’et*).

It appears that the tendency is to refer to time in generalities, using conventional terms which are more familiar to the reader, rather than exact reference to time.

Melitzah in Euchel’s Depiction of Lunch Time

An interesting comparison can be made with a similar picnic tableau by the Haskalah author and editor of *Hame’asef*, Isaac Euchel (1756–1804). It is also a travelogue written in the format of letters in 1785, just a few years before Romanelli wrote his book. We thus have a special interest in Euchel’s description, though the ambience is a more cultured one from a European point of view than in Romanelli’s story:

“malon ahat al em haderech, po nish’anu tahat ha’etz lish’oftzel kehom hayom, ve’achalnu lehem tzohorayim me’et asher nitzyadnu, veyashavnu sham ad asher kilu ha’avadim le’esor et hamerkavah” (an inn at a crossroads, where we reclined beneath a tree to breathe in some shade in the heat of the day, and we ate a noontime repast from what we had packed, and sat there until the servants were done with harnessing the carriage).⁶²

Euchel made short shrift of describing the location, mentioning an inn at a crossroads, which suits his well-planned travel in cultural Europe more than Romanelli’s, and is also more suited to the company of ladies journeying with him. The tree appears here as well but without any of the detail or linguistic ornament in Romanelli’s depiction. Euchel explained the stop as a pause for rest and as a chance to ready the carriage (to harness the horses), so the verb *nish’anu*, ‘we reclined,’ serves its purpose. There is no adverbial of time here,

⁶¹ R-K. “*Meshal Hasheleg, Ha’adamah, Vehanahar*” [The Fable of the Snow, the Earth, and the River], *Hame’asef*, II (1785), p. 85.

⁶² Itzik Euchel, “*Igrot Yitzḥak Eichel*” [Letters of Yitzḥak Eichel], *Hame’asef*, II (1785), p. 137.

but there is an adverbial of circumstance relating to noontime — *kehom hayom* (in the heat of the day; or: as the day grew hot) — which is a tanachic inlay (Genesis 18: 1, *et passim*). Close to it is the phrase *lish 'of tzel* (to breathe in some shade), itself a tanachic inlay based on Job 7: 2: “*ke'oved yish 'af tzel*” (like a servant who longs for the [evening’s] shadows). The combination of the two phrases yields an image of a hot day.

The expression *lish 'of tzel* sounds bizarre to the modern ear, but in terms of tanachic inlay Euchel has plucked the verb *yekaveh* from its scriptural context, where it parallels the verb *yish 'af* (“*ke'oved yish 'af tzel uchesachir yekave fo'olo*” [like a servant who longs for the (evening’s) shadows and like an hireling who waits for his wages (for his work)]) originally an abstraction from the act on inhalation (*sha 'af = kivah*) — and has restored it to its original sense. However, using the verb in a non-abstract sense has left it somewhat estranged from its object — for one cannot inhale shade as one inhales the breeze. Yet the metonymous image is an attractive one, both witty and original, of shade being inhaled as if it were a breeze.... The information about the luncheon is limited, with added details of the carriage not found in Romanelli’s description.

Further insight into the convention of depicting resting for lunch like Euchel’s may be found in the writings of the traveler William Lempriere, who visited Morocco at the same time as Romanelli:

“At noon I fixed upon the most shady spot I could find, and, agreeably to the Moorish fashion, sat down cross-legged on the grass and dined.”⁶³

Lempriere conveyed time with the sparing adverbial “at noon,” without mentioning the heat of the day (Euchel) or the position of the sun in midday (Romanelli). The search for shade is stressed, and a little local color added with the detail of the Oriental way of sitting (found elsewhere in Romanelli).⁶⁴ The place where he sat, on the grass, is given the maximum brevity, as is the information on the meal.

The comparison of Romanelli’s style to the others illustrated here reveals a linguistic richness and poetic craft that are a tribute to Romanelli as a poet, master of the Hebrew language and its *melitzah*.

In summary, Romanelli espoused linguistic and literary conventions that invoked the phraseological routines of the Tanach. This Scripture-based phrases led, by their very nature, to a generalized concept of a given experience rather than to a precise and distinctive description reflecting that unique personal experience. Thus, the use of such linguistic conventions while it will not validate an experience or event through description *per sé*, it can

⁶³ William Lempriere, *A Tour through the Dominion of the Emperor of Morocco*, 3rd ed., (Newport, 1813), p. 69. On this traveller, see Pelli, *Sugot Vesugyot Besifrut Hahaskalah Ha 'ivrit*, chapter VII, p. 207, note 9.

⁶⁴ *Masa Ba'rav* (1792), pp. 13, 29; Dorot edition (1969), pp. 40, 61.

point towards universally shared elements, thereby involving the reader in the experience itself through its deep-rooted cultural resonance.

Based on our discussion on the use of *melitzah* in Romanelli's writing, and on the analyses of the *melitzic shibutz* by Miron and Fischler and Parush, as discussed above, we cannot accept the term 'shreds of verses' — conventionally employed, it will be recalled, in criticism of the *melitzah* style — as being true of Haskalah writers using *melitzah* at its best, and of Romanelli's use of *melitzah*.

Romanelli's art of the *melitzah* is not based on arbitrary or random shredding of verses but is an artistic use of verse 'off-cuts' intended to enhance the description and to serve the narrative. Klausner was thus correct when he spoke of the *melitzah* in Romanelli's *Masa Ba'rav*; Shahevitch's claim that "his [Romanelli's] language is virtually *melitzah*-free"⁶⁵ does not hold up.

As we have argued elsewhere,⁶⁶ while the luxuriant style of *melitzah* was artificial, clumsy and at times hazy and inappropriate to everyday language, it had qualities that served the Hebrew authors well, enabling them to embrace the whole multi-layered history of the language. Literary Hebrew thus evolved subtly with all its array of allusions and fine distinctions; this evolution, in fact, was itself a reflection of all that is problematic in the duality of Jewish existence in the modern secular world. In this manner Hebrew has been expanded from a sacred into a secular, mundane tongue.

The Reception of Maskilic *Melitzah* in the Nineteenth Century

As discussed in chapter two on the reception of early Haskalah in the nineteenth century, the attitude toward the literature of the Haskalah changed with the emergence of the school of criticism in the 1860s in the writings of Avraham Uri Kovner (1842–1909), Avraham Yaakov Papirna (1840–1919), and in the 1870s by Peretz Smolenskin (1842–1885).

The main thrust of the attack on the Haskalah was its use of language and particularly on the *melitzah*. It is ironic that these critics rejected the maskilic *melitzah* in the same way that the early Maskilim rejected the rabbinic *melitzah*. In 1866, Kovner launched an attack on the language and the contents of Haskalah literature, whose self appointed poets just selected difficult *melitzot* from the books of the Bible, making them rhyme and adding all kinds of rhythmic restrictions (such as the requirement of 11 syllables).⁶⁷ He accused them of writing in grandiose language, high-flown and sublime poems which were without any substance or real contents, inner idea or new view (p. 40). He

⁶⁵ Shahevitch, "Arba Leshonot: Iyunim Shel Sifrut Bileshon Hamaskilim Al Pi 'Hame'asef'" *Molad* (new series) 1:2 (1967), p. 236, note. See Joseph Klausner, *Historiah Shel Hasifrut Ha'ivrit Hahadashah* [History of Modern Hebrew Literature], I (Jerusalem, 1960), p. 318.

⁶⁶ Pelli, *Bema 'avkei Temurah*, p. 24.

⁶⁷ Avraham Uri Kovner, *Heker Davar* [Probing a Matter] (Warsaw, 1866), p. 42.

argued that their use of *melitzot* was intended “to cover up their nakedness” (p. 44).

At this juncture of the development of Hebrew literature, the flowery and ornate language in the poetical writing of the early Maskilim seemed to nineteenth-century writers, still Maskilim, no more than shallow and superficial *melitzot* and was rejected off-hand.

A year later, in 1867, Papirna criticized the Haskalah’s use of blown-up and lofty language.⁶⁸ He explained that in the past, classical poets used *melitzot* out of admiration for the Holy Scriptures. However, contemporary writers made the art of *melitzah* easy on themselves, by “tearing to pieces scriptural verses, collected and assembled these bits, and rearranged some words from the prayer books, the *piyut*, and the Agadah. And the reader would find a collection of strange and bizarre words that have no connection between and among them [...] and we, the children of Israel, got used to such puffed and blown up *melitzah* phraseology.”

Papirna further provided some examples which he analyzed, saying that they were “unfathomable riddles” to the reader and apparently to the writer as well, and that one cannot decipher whether “they were written in Persian, Sursi [Aramaic], Tartar or Sanskrit” (p. 31).

Such criticism and the critical analyses of many examples of *melitzot* by Haskalah writers are indicative of a complete revision of the concept of poetry, thus annulling the *melitzah* altogether.

One can find the change of attitude toward the maskilic *melitzah* already in mid-century. In the introduction to his book *Minim Ve’ugav* (Lute and Pipe), Eliezer Zweifel (1815–1888) argued that the reading public has changed its linguistic aesthetics and now rejected “the beauty of *melitzah* and the purity of the language.”⁶⁹ Consequently, he decided to write in a style that combines all three historical layers of the Hebrew language: Tanach, Mishnah and Talmud.

However, there were still Maskilim who defended the use of *melitzah*. Shalom Yaakov Abramovich criticized Zweifel for his view of the *melitzah*, pleading for the continuous employment of *melitzah* as part of the aesthetic attributes of Hebrew poetry that should still be adhered to.⁷⁰

In the 1870s, Peretz Smolenskin, the editor of *Hashahar* (Dawn), attacked the Me’asfim, the writers in the circle of *Hame’asef*, who “filled their books with empty and dry stuff which contained no knowledge or ideas.”⁷¹ As he dismissed their writings, he was very critical of their use of the *melitzah*, and their aesthetic concept of poetry in general.

⁶⁸ Avraham Papira, *Kankan Hadash Male Yashan* [A New Jar Filled with Old] (Vilna, 1867; facsimile edition: Tel Aviv, 1969), p. 30.

⁶⁹ Eliezer Zweifel, *Minim Ve’ugav* [Lute and Pipe] (Vilna, 1858), pp. 16–17.

⁷⁰ Shalom Yaakov Abramovich, “Kilkul Haminim” [Spoiled Lute], *Mishpat Shalom* [A Peaceful Judgment] (Vilna, 1860), pp. 23–24.

⁷¹ Peretz Smolenskin, “Et Lata’at” [Time to Plant], *Ma’amarim* [Articles], II (Jerusalem, 1925), p. 153. The article, part II, was published first in 1877.

The editor of *Hashilo'ah*, Ahad Ha'am (Asher Ginsberg) (1856–1927), too, expressed his negative view of the *melitzah* in the 1890s. In his article on language and literature published in 1893, he asserted that Hebrew literature was lacking in thought and it became a craft, rather than art, for writing a “beautiful *melitzah*” that could be written by anyone without literary talent, yet will be considered as a writer.⁷²

In 1897, Mordechai Ehrenpreis (1869–1961), representing the young guards of *Hamahalach Hehadash* (The New Direction) in modern Hebrew literature, dismissed Haskalah in general as non-literature. He quoted from *Nahal Habesor* the editors’ proclamation of their intention to publish “pleasant *melitzot*,” and argued that their basic intention was to write in Hebrew and remedy the language rather than remedy the ills of Jewish society and resuscitate it.⁷³

An attempt to trace the negative attitude toward the *melitzah* in the twentieth century would lead to Hayim Nahman Bialik (1873–1934), considered a national poet and an authority on Hebrew poetry, in his well-known views on the *melitzah*.

H. N. Bialik: There Is No Inner Beauty in the *Shibutz*

Bialik certainly had a hand in determining this attitude toward the *melitzah* of the Haskalah. In 1914, Bialik came out strongly against the *shibutz* style of the *piyut* poetry that had endured up until the period of the Haskalah. He defined this usage as “language which emits the flash of the occasional block-busting word or stirring, startling expression, sometimes with half-verses culled from Holy Scripture.”⁷⁴ He argued that the Hebrew poets had imitated Arab poets in the use of words — “they saw the importance of the word not in its being a small piece of an artistic work but as a precious stone with an independent value all of its own” (p. 12).

To Bialik’s mind, the Hebrew poets “employed rhymes and *shibutz* prose rather than resorting to the biblical forms, in which there is no external ornament and in which the beauty of the word derives from the place it occupies and not from itself....” Herein lay the ‘grating’ strangeness in reading

⁷² Asher Ginsberg, “Lishe’elat Halashon — Halashon Vesifrutah” [On the Question of Language — Language and Its Literature], *Kol Kitvei Ahad Ha’am* [The Complete Writings of A. H.] (Tel Aviv, 1956; first printed in 1893), p. 95.

⁷³ Mordechai Ehrenpreis, “Le’an?” [Whither?], *Hashilo’ah*, I (1897), p. 491 (the whole article: pp. 489–503); republished in Mordechai Ehrenpreis, *Le’an?* [Whither?], Avner Holtzman, ed. (Jerusalem, 1998), pp. 105–133 (the quotation is on pp. 107, 109–110).

⁷⁴ Hayim Nahman Bialik, “Letoldot Hashirah Ha’ivrit Hahadashah” [On the History of Modern Hebrew Poetry], *Devarim Shebe’al Peh*, II (Tel Aviv, 1935), pp. 10–11. It was a lecture delivered in 1914.

their prose. “There is no inner beauty in it, nothing in which form and content are equally matched” (p. 12). For Bialik, it was precisely this that flawed the writing of the Haskalah, too; and on this basis he claimed that Moshe Hayim Luzzatto (known as RaMHaL, 1707–1747), who “threw down the gauntlet to the *shibutz* style of Hebrew prose,” was the first modern Hebrew poet even before the poets of the German Haskalah (pp. 14–15).

Elsewhere, Bialik argued that until Mendele Mocher Sefarim (Shalom Yaakov Abramovich), Hebrew literature had amounted to an artistic “zero.” “They had forever been scratching around on the surface of the shell, but their pen never seemed to get inside [...] for portraying nature, it was again a case of two or three well-worn coinages lifted from the Bible....”⁷⁵ “Until Mendele what we had were linguistic tricks and games, linguistic papers, linguistic shreds and patches; Mendele handed us one language that was a whole [...] He was virtually the first in our modern literature to stop imitating the Book — he imitated nature and life.” (p. 327)

Bialik thus gave voice to that negative response toward Haskalah style and attitude that has taken a hold on our literary life, and even penetrated into literary criticism and historiography of literature, realms that are supposed to be balanced and objective.

●

It stands to reason that the negative attitude toward Haskalah’s poetic use of *melitzah* is a product of the attitude toward Haskalah literature in general and its use of the Hebrew language in particular, as expounded in chapter two on the reception of the Haskalah

Unquestionably, the definition of the maskilic *melitzah*, as found in the dictionaries, cited above, and in the contemporary view of it as representing “broken verses” must be rejected out of hand.

Finally, it should be noted that the change in attitude toward *melitzah* is not limited to Hebrew letters. Even in English there occurred an erosion in the meaning of the term ‘rhetoric,’ and Oxford Dictionary states the second meaning as follows:

“2. a. Elegance or eloquence of language; eloquent speech or writing. b. Speech or writing expressed in terms calculated to persuade; hence (often in depreciatory sense), language characterized by artificial or ostentatious expression.”⁷⁶

⁷⁵ *Idem*, “Mendele Ushloschet Hakrachim” [Mendele and the Three Volumes] *Collected Works*, II (Tel Aviv, 1935), p. 326. Compare Bialik’s use of the word *melitzah* in the translation of *Don Kishot Ish Lamansha* [*Don Quixote, the Man of La Mancha*] (Tel Aviv, 1961), p. 43: “Uleshon hasefarim af hi amukah uchvedah veniftalalah mehavin, lo hadar la velo ta’am, kulah melitzah al melitzah, ishah tselah mere’utah” (and the language of the books too is profound and heavy and contorted beyond comprehension, without beauty or taste, entirely *melitzah* upon *melitzah*, each one more insipid than the last).

⁷⁶ *Oxford English Dictionary*, XIII (Oxford, 1989), p. 857.

***PERIODICALS OF HASKALAH:
IMPACT ON DEVELOPMENT OF HASKALAH***

CHAPTER SIX:

HAME'ASEF: “A NEW PERIODICAL NEVER PUBLISHED BEFORE”

“המאסף : מכתב חדש אשר עזן בימיינו לא היה
נחל הבהיר, א’

The beginning of modern Hebrew literature is generally considered to have started in Germany in the 1780s with the emergence of the Haskalah movement. It is attributed to the activities of a group of enterprising young Hebrew writers who undertook a new and daring venture. They aspired to revive the Jewish people by revitalizing the Hebrew language and Jewish culture. As part of their plan, they began publishing a modern, up-to-date monthly journal in the Hebrew language named *Hame'asef* (The Gatherer).¹ The periodical, published during the years 1783–1797 and 1809–1811, was more than just a literary journal patterned after contemporary German literary publications.

The journal became the ideological mouthpiece of a literary and cultural movement that began a concerted effort to affect a cultural revolution among Jews in Germany and elsewhere in Europe. It also served as an organ that published the literary works produced by its circle of writers. Through their literary endeavor, these writers ushered in modern times in Jewish history and started modern trends in Hebrew letters.

The periodical reflects one of the most important periods in modern Jewish history, marking the transition of European Jews (at that time, the dominant segment of world Jewry) into the modern era. It represents the

¹ *Hame'asef* [The Gatherer], I (1783/4). On the journal, see the monograph and index, Moshe Pelli, *Sha'ar Lahaskalah* [Gate to Haskalah], Annotated Index of *Hame'asef*, First Modern Periodical in Hebrew (1783–1811) (Jerusalem, 2000). A preliminary, shorter version of this chapter was included in my book on *Hame'asef* as an English abstract

Hebrew Enlightenment's aspirations and efforts to revive and modernize Hebrew language and culture in an attempt to resuscitate the Jewish people.

Hame'asef should be regarded as the first modern Hebrew periodical which was published continuously for some duration, disregarding *Kohelet Musar* (Preacher of Morals), the ephemeral publication that Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786) had published in 1750s (see below). Thus, in many respects, *Hame'asef*, marked the beginning of the Hebrew press.

A whole period of early Haskalah is named after the journal and its writers. It is called 'Dor Hame'asfim,' the generation of writers around *Hame'asef*. Thus, the early period of Haskalah is epitomized by the journal and the reception of the early Haskalah in the nineteenth century is marked by the continuous reference to *Hame'asef* and its writers.

Historical Role of *Hame'asef*

The editors of *Hame'asef* were the initiators of the new literary and cultural movement that had a long-range influence, as discussed previously in the book, and the periodical served as the major organ of this new activity. Its continuous publication from 1783 to 1811, with some interruptions, epitomized major cultural and literary developments that typified the emergence of modern Hebrew literature.

Some of the first works of literature in modern Hebrew letters were first published in *Hame'asef*, or else were discussed and reviewed in that journal. Likewise, major literary genres that were prevalent in European literature at the time were first introduced to Hebrew literature in *Hame'asef*.

All in all, in *belles lettres*, the journal published poetry and prose, drama, parables, fables and epigrams, satire, dialogues and Dialogues of the Dead, travelogues, biographies, and an autobiography. In addition to original works, the journal printed translations into Hebrew of poetry and prose from European languages.

Aside from *belles lettres*, *Hame'asef* printed articles in the general areas of Judaica and Hebraica, covering the wide spectrum of Jewish civilization and Jewish experience. It manifested its interest in contemporary issues of Jewish life by printing articles on education, society, culture, and religion, as well as on contemporary community and social issues.

It also published critical essays on literature, history, and scholarly studies on philosophy, ethics and religion, grammar and linguistics, biblical commentaries and talmudic exegesis.

It was the major organ for disseminating the ideology of the Haskalah in its struggle to improve the cultural and religious condition of the Jews from within in order eventually to achieve their much-desired civil rights from without. Revolutionary for its time, the monthly periodical advocated the introduction of secular studies into the curriculum, fostered a new attitude by Jews to the arts and sciences, and integration into the surrounding cultural milieu.

The very structure of the periodical which included many sections in various disciplines in Judaica and the humanities reflected the multiplicity of subjects that occupied the minds of these young Maskilim — the new Jews — and the scope of their interests. The periodical exemplified the concept of a ‘magazine,’ a storehouse of many topics and subjects in the humanities, the sciences as well as in Jewish Studies, as a substitute for rabbinic Judaism’s concentration mostly on Halachah — religious legal matters — and on the study of the Talmud.

While shifting their focus from the main occupation of rabbinic Judaism, the Maskilim did adopt some of its conventions and practices, as discussed in chapter one. Thus, their intellectual and creative energy continued the existing trends of producing commentaries on classical texts of Judaism. However, they were guided by the pursuit of scholarship, comparative study, and emphasis on the *peshat*, the straight forward interpretation of the text.

The editors of *Hame'asef* viewed contemporary Judaism through the prism of the ideological platform of the Haskalah movement, as presented in the journal, deviating somewhat from the accepted norms in the traditional perception of Judaism. This was a revised view and reinterpretation of Jewish heritage, which incorporated both tradition and innovation.² It presented a new and modern perception of Judaism.

***Hame'asef* — A Permanent Cultural Institution**

The periodical became a permanent cultural institution. During its span of publication, several Haskalah authors served as editors: the founding editors Isaac Euchel (1756–1804) and Mendel Breslau (1761–1827), in its first years, Aaron Wolfsohn (1754–1835) and Joel Brill (1762–1802), later on, and Shalom Hacohen (1771–1845), in its final years. In editing the journal they attempted to maintain a policy of continuity, following in the footsteps of the founding fathers, yet they also introduced innovations and changes. The contributors to the journal and its editors, known as Me'asfim, the circle of writers around *Hame'asef*, all shared the sense of commitment and involvement in the literary, cultural and social undertakings of *Hame'asef*.

As a new voice of the Hebrew elite, the monthly journal aimed to reach Maskilim throughout the Jewish communities of Europe, uniting them under one banner of Haskalah and speaking on their behalf.

Thus, *Hame'asef* became a vehicle for communication between and among writers, readers, and subscribers, the latter being listed in several issues. Writers and readers communicated with the editors, expressing their support for *Hame'asef*, for the newly established society of Hebraists and for

² See Moshe Pelli, *In Search of Genre: Hebrew Enlightenment and Modernity* (Lanham, 2005), chapter one, “Haskalah in Search of Genre: Beginning of Haskalah and Modernity.”

their contributions to reviving the Hebrew language, or, at times, disapproving of views expressed on its pages.

The journal contributed in many ways to the literary effort to renew the Hebrew literature. *Hame'asef* and its editors and writers aspired and endeavored to cultivate their readers' taste, appreciation of beauty and literary aesthetic. Its writers developed their theories on poetics and applied them in literary works, while cultivating the literary conventions of various genres. The theoretical discussions of the literary group that surrounded the journal broadened its horizons beyond the new and revived Hebrew letters, and extended them to redefining and re-evaluating phenomena of major creative works in the classical Jewish writings. Similarly, immense spiritual and creative effort went into the definition of biblical poetry within the *Be'ur* project — the commentary on and the translation into German of the Pentateuch — and its later developments following Mendelssohn's initial enterprise.³

Contrary to *Kohelet Musar* that was written by one or two persons, namely, Moses Mendelssohn and a friend, Tuviah Bock, *Hame'asef* did have many contributors. Some of the most important Hebrew writers of the time contributed to *Hame'asef* which they considered the major organ for the reviving of Hebrew letters. Actually, the journal served as a 'spiritual center' for many Hebrew writers of the period, both those who were in Germany at the time as well as writers who lived outside the German center in other European countries. Among them were David Franco Mendes (*Hofshi*) in Amsterdam, Eliyahu Morpurgo in Italy, Moshe Ensheim in France, Baruch and Juda Jeiteles in Prague, and Ephraim Luzzatto who lived in London. Also, Joseph Ha'efrati who lived in Prague in his last years, and Herz Homberg who was active in Austria.

Some of these Hebrew authors were invited to partake in the ideological struggles on behalf of Haskalah that started to expand beyond its limited geographical boundaries. They were enlisted to join the actions in support of the Haskalah or Maskilim. Such was the behind-the-scenes activities of Morpurgo soliciting Italian rabbis' support for Wessely, writing letters on his behalf in his controversial educational reforms.⁴

This German center attracted several writers and they moved there from other countries in Europe. Naphtali Herz Wessely went through several stations, including Copenhagen and Amsterdam, before coming to Berlin in 1774 (prior to the formal establishment of the center of Haskalah). Solomon

³ See chapter one in this book on the "Renewal of Hebrew Letters: Examining the Classical Literature," and chapter two on "Editions of Early Haskalah Books Republished in the Nineteenth Century: Scriptures."

⁴ See Moshe Pelli, *The Age of Haskalah* (Lanham, 2006), chapter VI, especially p. 128, and *idem*, *Bema'avkei Temurah* [Struggle for Change] (Tel Aviv, 1988), chapter II, pp. 63–66.

Maimon came from Lithuania, Juda Leib Ben Zeev came from Krakow, Isaac Satanow, too, came to Berlin in his adult years, and Shalom Hacohen came from Poland.

The variety of Hebrew writers and their different backgrounds were unified under the journal in their desire to ‘practice’ Haskalah and to disseminate its ideology to others.

In assessing the role of *Hame'asef* in creating the new or revived Hebrew culture, one should note its contribution to the development of the Hebrew language, the modern language of communication in the revived Hebrew culture. The language went through experimental linguistic laboratory as the timely need arose to establish proper forms of expressions for daily terms that involved new scientific and scholarly topics and modern and secular aspects of the surrounding European reality.

It should also be noted that Haskalah literature was not an esoteric literary phenomenon but was an integral part of a social and cultural phenomena — actually a public movement. It was the Haskalah movement that began to be formed by a group of Maskilim who established the journal and declared its goals in the prospectus *Nahal Habesor* (The Brook ‘Besor,’ or Good Tidings) in 1783.

As an organ of that movement, *Hame'asef* dealt with various topics related to contemporary Jewish experience in Europe. Those were relevant subjects that addressed issues in contemporary Judaism and Jewish life. In effect, the writers of *Hame'asef* discussed many issues that confronted the modern Jew and the Jewish society on the verge of modernization.

The influence of *Hame'asef* continued beyond its times, and after its demise in 1811, there were several attempts to reprint its material and to issue similar publications under the same name, as delineated in a previous chapter.⁵

***Hame'asef* and *Kohelet Musar*: Originality and Ephemerality**

As mentioned earlier, I consider *Hame'asef* as the first modern Hebrew periodical in spite of the phenomenon of *Kohelet Musar* that Moses Mendelssohn had published in 1750s. While *Kohelet Musar* is important in the cultural history of Hebrew letters, representing remarkable cultural and language trends in this pre-Haskalah period, it was basically an ephemeral publication.⁶ The arguments for *Hame'asef* are overwhelming: This journal,

⁵ See chapter two under the caption “Edition of Early Haskalah Books Republished in the Nineteenth Century: *Hame'asef*” and on the reception of *Hame'asef*.

⁶ As advocated by Meir Gilon in his book *Kohelet Musar Lemendelsohn Al Reka Tekufato* [Mendelssohn’s *Kohelet Musar* Against the Background of Its Time] (Jerusalem, 1979). [Moses Mendelsohn], ed., *Kohelet Musar* [Preacher of Morals] (1750s).

unlike the short-lived *Kohelet Musar*, was published continuously, although with some interruptions, for some duration from 1783 to 1811 in ten volumes.

Hame'asef, unlike *Kohelet Musar*, was a more permanent publication, representing a complex phenomenon which manifested the beginning of Haskalah and the revival of Hebrew literature. Its interests and its impact transcended its boundaries and its time.

More importantly, *Hame'asef* was associated with a cultural institution, *Hevrat Dorshei Leshon Ever* (The Society of the Seekers of the Hebrew Language), a literary and cultural association which established an active center of Hebrew literature. It cultivated the creative efforts of Hebrew writers and poets and in a way established the borderless community of Hebrew enlighteners — the Haskalah Republic of Letters.

The short term and the long term impact of this society are overwhelming. The society established a publishing house and a printing press, which published works by its members and other Hebrew writers, and engaged in actual dissemination of the newly founded Hebrew culture.⁷ It further published the Maskilim's up-to-date editions of classical works with their modern interpretation. It also established a modern Jewish school in Berlin, a trend that continued in other cities.

Hame'asef was initiated independent of the publication of *Kohelet Musar* some thirty years earlier. The editors of the journal were not aware of the preceding publication, and when they finally learned about it, in 1785, they were pleased to publish a selection from *Kohelet Musar*.⁸ Based on various definitions of a periodical, one may question whether *Kohelet Musar* can be considered as a periodical at all because of the lack of identifiable signs to this effect.⁹

Moral Weeklies and Literary Periodicals as Background to *Hame'asef*

Since the newly published Hebrew journal did not have any modern precedent within Jewish or Hebrew circles (with the exception of some religious serial publications,¹⁰ and *Kohelet Musar* of which the editors were not aware when they launched the periodical), one should view the initiation of the first modern Hebrew journal of early Haskalah in Germany as related to the new cultural climate in enlightened Europe. It was also related to

⁷ רפ"ס חכמת חנוך נערם (*Defus Hevrat Hinuch Ne'arim* — The Printing Press of the Society for the Education of Youth) — Verlag der jüdischen Freyschule.

⁸ *Hame'asef*, II (1785), pp. 90–95, 103–105.

⁹ See details in note 15 below.

¹⁰ *Pri Etz Hayim* (The Fruit of the Tree of Life) (1691–1807), a religious periodical of responsa.

similar changes that have impacted the newly emerging middle class among urban Jews in Germany.

An important phenomenon of the changing cultural milieu in Europe was manifested in the publication of moral weeklies in England and in Germany mostly in the first half of the eighteenth century. They were exemplified by their unique style and use of distinctive literary conventions. Such English weeklies as *The Tatler* (1709–1711), *The Spectator* (1711–1715) and *The Guardian* (1713), published in the second decade of the eighteenth century, exerted great influence over the German periodicals which emulated them and used their material.

These German weeklies served as a popular conduit for introducing the general public to *belles lettres* and they were instrumental in disseminating the ideology of the *Aufklärung*. Some concurrent cultural phenomena ought to be mentioned in this context, namely, the continuing spread of education among the middle classes, the increased circulation of books, and the establishment of readers’ societies, reading rooms, public libraries, and literary cafés.¹¹

Thus, the changes in the cultural scene in Europe and the exposure of more people to the Enlightenment and to its values are said to have initiated the rise of the literary periodicals in the second half of the century, and concurrently perhaps even been influenced from it. These literary and cultural changes left their marks also on the more advanced circles among urban Jews in Germany, especially among the well-to-do upper class which was exposed to the surrounding culture, and thus prepared the ground for the reception of the Haskalah.¹²

These phenomena served as a general backdrop for the launching of the Hebrew monthly.

Berlinische Monatsschrift and *Hame'asef*: Affinity and Influence

In the second half of the century, one notes the increase in the literary periodicals in Germany, which changed their contents to include also history and politics besides literature in order to appeal to a larger readership, and in the second half of the century they replaced the moral weeklies in stature and reception. One of the most important literary periodicals in Germany

¹¹ See Victor Lange, *The Classical Age of German Literature (1740–1815)* (New York, 1982), p. 33; W. H. Bruford, *Germany in the Eighteenth Century: the Social Background of the Literary Revival* (Cambridge, 1952), p. 283; Wolfgang Beutin, et al., ed., *A History of German Literature* (London and New York, 1993), p. 159.

¹² See Jacob Katz, *Hayetzi'ah Min Hageto* [Out of the Ghetto] (Tel Aviv, 1985), chapters 3, 4, 5; David Sorkin, *The Transformation of German Jewry 1780–1840* (New York, 1987), ch. 5.

was the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, which started publication in 1783, half a year before the Hebrew journal, and thus was generally regarded as having influenced it.

By examining the prospectuses of both the German and Hebrew monthlies and the contents of their respective issues, one may conclude that while there were certain similarities between the two journals, their orientation was fundamentally different. The similarities in format, size, and printing practices may be explained as typical of other German periodicals, examined as well, which shared these similarities.¹³

A comparison of the literary output of the two journals and their use of literary genres also indicates that both follow general trends prevalent in eighteenth-century European literature. Thus, the similarities in their literary use of poetry, fables, travelogues, and epistolary writings are explained as common to other journals as well. Also, there are affinities in their selection of certain topics: both journals published articles on religious matters; both expressed an interest in burial issues, revival of the respective national language, as well as dwelling on education, science, history and philosophy. These topics are said to have been prevalent also in other German journals of the time.

The ostensible affinity between the two is thus explained as an adherence to tenets of the Enlightenment, to prevailing literary conventions, and to common journalistic practices. Unquestionably, the Hebrew journal concentrated on its own unique Hebraic heritage, adhering to its commitment to revive the Hebrew language and Hebrew literature by publishing original literary works as well as scholarly and popular articles on Judaic and secular subjects.

Similarly, reviewing some of the other important German journals of the time, such as the *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek* (started in 1765), *Magazin für die Deutsche Sprache* (1782), *Der Deutsche Merkur* (1783), and *Deutsches Museum* (1776), one notices the customary journalistic patterns, formats and trends. Here, too, the Hebrew journal's similarity to the German periodicals in general is marked by its attempt to create a unique Judaic and Hebraic character for which there was no precedent. Rather, the editors followed the unique general literary and spiritual tradition of Hebrew letters, modifying topics and formats to adhere to the demands and requirements of the ideology of the Haskalah.¹⁴

In the study of Enlightenment periodicals, critics such as W. Graham, R. Bond, and J. Wilke suggested various definitions that may be applied to

¹³ Pelli, *Sha'ar Lahaskalah*, Annotated Index of *Hame'asef*, First Modern Periodical in Hebrew (1783–1811), pp. 24–29.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 29–30.

the press in that century.¹⁵ Accordingly, *Hame'asef* may be classified as an interdisciplinary periodical, dedicated to both creative work and thought, yet also as a journal dedicated to disseminating knowledge and promoting the ideology of the Hebrew Enlightenment.

Nahal Habesor* — the Prospectus of *Hame'asef

Prior to the publication of *Hame'asef* in Königsberg, Prussia, the editors published in the spring of 1783 a 16-page prospectus titled *Nahal Habesor*, signed by Isaac Euchel, as editor, and three associates: Mendel Breslau, Simon Friedländer and Zanwil Friedländer. Laid out in the same format as the future *Hame'asef* itself, this lengthy manifesto was structured as elaborate answers to five basic questions: What? Who? For whom? Why? How?

The first three answers provided information on the content of the planned periodical; it is followed by a general discussion on the identity of the editors and their qualifications, and their first act to promote the journal by soliciting support from Naphtali Herz Wessely (Weisel). A poet, exegete, philologist, and an esteemed authority in Hebrew literature, who just published his call for educational reform (see chapters one and two), the editors of the journal sought his approbation, his guidance and his future participation. Wessely's encouraging reply, which contained some practical advice, followed.

The fourth answer addressed the reason for the publication of the journal at that time and its general objectives. Finally, the last answer detailed information about the founding of the cultural society, “The Society of the Seekers of the Hebrew Language,” which launched the journal.

Detailing the contents of the journal, the editors presented their plan to organize the Hebrew monthly in five major departments, as follows:

1) **Poetry:** Poems that will be published in the “holy tongue” will be devoted to wisdom and ethics. They will be devoid of modern trends in European poetry that gleaned its materials from classical pagan mythology. Similarly, sensual love songs, too, will be forbidden. Thus, the editors applied Wessely's restrictions as stated in his approbation and guidance (see below).

2) **Articles and essays:** This department will be divided into four subsections:

a) *Hebrew Language and linguistics:* This section will contain

¹⁵ Walter Graham, *English Literary Periodicals* (New York, 1966), pp. 14–15. Richmond P. Bond, ed., *Studies in the Early English Periodical* (Chapel Hill, 1957), pp. 3, 15; Jürgen Wilke, *Literarische Zeitschriften des 18. Jahrhunderts (1688-1789)*, 1 (Stuttgart, 1978), p. 3.

linguistic essays on all aspects of Hebrew, reflecting the Haskalah objective to rejuvenate the Hebrew language, as well as articles on Hebrew grammar, synonyms, rhetoric and poetics;

b) *Hebrew Bible*: Articles on translation into German of the Bible and its commentary as well as commentaries on difficult passages in the Bible, in accordance with tradition “and other views,” yet leaning toward the *peshat*, the literal and straight forward interpretation of the text, following in the footsteps of Mendelssohn’s *Be’ur*;

c) *Knowledge and ethics*: Original and translated texts from the classical corpus and from contemporary scholarship, written in an aesthetic language on topics suitable to be presented to Maskilim;

d) *Talmud*: Discussions about the orderly study of the Talmud founded on “wisdom,” and about the origins of Halachah, in counter distinction to the traditional way of learning and teaching the Talmud; additionally, articles about education: both ethical and physical education;

3) **Biographies**: Biographies will be devoted to the lives of rabbis and exemplary personalities, renowned persons who excelled in *Hochmah*, wisdom, and in Haskalah scholarship, and to respectable merchants and well to do individuals. These three sectors reflect the orientation of Haskalah at its inception: combining tradition with innovation;

4) **News**: News reports would focus on events in Jewish life in various countries, which, in the editors’ view, were particularly important to signify the new trends in Europe: the effect of modern education, the eradication of ignorance, and the emergence of tolerance that would have a significant impact on Jewish life;

5) **Review of books**: This section will include book reviews and announcements of new books of Jewish interest published in Hebrew and in other languages.

While most of these categories were borrowed from the contemporary European press, they were exclusively adopted to the Jewish-Hebraic context and needs. Thus, the section of poetry comprised creative writing in Hebrew; the essays were devoted to the Hebrew language, Bible and Talmud, obviously Judaic in contents. The section on knowledge and ethics may be classified as general, not necessarily Jewish in its orientation. The sections of biography, news and book reviews were borrowed from the European press, yet were devoted mostly to Jewish topics. Thus, this manifesto clearly implied that the thrust of the proposed periodical would be strictly Judaic in nature.

Addressing the question, “who,” the editors introduced themselves as a homogeneous group of Haskalah seekers who blend religious studies with modern scholarship, an ideal of early Haskalah. Anxious not to be perceived as a threat to the traditional Jewish establishment and as moderate in their Enlightenment orientation, they portrayed themselves as knowledgeable in Western culture and in foreign languages, yet also versed in the study of the Bible, the Hebrew language, and in the classical texts of traditional Judaism.

Eager to portray themselves as having some literary experience, they emphasized that they had previously written on biblical commentary, Hebrew grammar and on Hebrew poetics. However, being young and looking for an authoritative recognition, they reported that they had approached Naphtali Herz Wessely, requesting his involvement and participation in their publishing enterprise.

Wessely replied in a two-page letter, addressed to the editor, Isaac Euchel, in which he welcomed their initiative to publish a Hebrew periodical. He advised them how to conduct themselves vis-à-vis some traditional elements in the community that may be opposed to the journal, suspecting that it may represent some modern trends which they were not ready to accept.

He warned them not to appear too innovative. Thus, they should inculcate the notion of the “fear of God” in their writing and they ought to avoid citing the names of pagan gods in their poems, and refrain from publishing erotic poetry, love stories and satire. Wessely insisted that their linguistic writings should concentrate on Hebrew as based on the traditional texts rather than resort to rhetoric as applied to secular languages in general. Thus, Wessely exhibited his own non-Enlightenment tendencies, which the editors followed somewhat at first, but soon distanced themselves from his advice and forged ahead with their Enlightenment agenda.¹⁶

The rest of the prospectus discussed the target audience of the journal: young Maskilim. The editors explained the impetus that prompted them to launch the journal: the social and cultural changes that they had noticed on the European scene, referring to the emerging Age of Reason, and the allegedly ostensible practice of tolerance. They expressed their awareness of these changes and stated their aspiration that the Jewish people should benefit from them. In addition, the editors undertook to cultivate and promote the modern use of the Hebrew language, and to advocate the use of a more clear and precise style of writing in Hebrew. In creative writing, they demanded that poetry be sublime in its lofty thought, scope of idea, and figurative language that impacts the soul.

The answer to the last question, “how,” described the establishment of the Society of the Seekers of the Hebrew language and its goal to publish the journal, as one of its cultural endeavors. The editors extended a call to contributors to send their writings to the journal.

The title of the prospectus was selected to convey a clear message. The meaning of *Nahal Habesor* should be examined against its biblical context in I Samuel 30: 9: the text tells of David and four hundred of his army who were fighting while two hundred were left at the Brook Besor. Winning the war, evil people wanted to deprive the two hundred people who stayed

¹⁶ See Pelli, *Bema'avkei Temurah*, chapter II, pp. 48–55.

behind of the war spoil. However, David decreed that everybody would share, both warriors and non-warriors.

In the title of the prospectus the Maskilim planted the message of Haskalah: they are undertaking to fight a battle for the Enlightenment, which will benefit everybody, both active Maskilim as well as non-active Jews.

Similarly, the meaning of the title of the journal, *Hame'asef*, is to be explained based on its biblical subtext in Numbers 10: 25: The tribe of Dan was said to be “As the rear guard of all the divisions.” Accordingly, the Maskilim did not consider themselves as the front guard but as the rear guard to all segments and sectors. The word ‘*me'asef*’ itself means ‘to gather,’ and the editors explained their mission: as a “gatherer” either of material or of truth – along similar titles of German journals “Sammeler,” which meant to gather the Truth.

Nahal Habesor, like *Hame'asef* itself, reflected the unique character of Hebrew Haskalah, a movement that stemmed from the general Enlightenment atmosphere in Europe and the *Aufklärung* in Germany, but one that carved out its own particular path.

Review of *Hame'asef* from 1783 to 1811

Following the prospectus, *Hame'asef* was issued as a monthly in the fall of 1783 and continued publication intermittently, at times as a quarterly, in ten volumes, until its demise in 1811.

The first volume of the journal, consisting of 12 monthly issues, is viewed as representing a moderate mode of Haskalah in its inception. It purported to embrace the traditional aspect of Judaism and to defend its tenets, though from a more modern point of view. In a seminal article, the editor, Euchel, stated that “our tradition is our faith, from which we cannot deviate.”¹⁷ Yet, he advocated the freedom to search and explore in philosophy and metaphysics without any restrictions.

Overcoming technical difficulties of launching a new periodical in Hebrew, the editors and the leaders of the Society of the Seekers of the Hebrew Language announced at the end of the first issue that they were able to secure 200 subscribers, which is a sizable number.

This volume signaled the bi-lingual orientation of the journal which, in addition to Hebrew material, initiated a German supplement published twice a year. The editors’ intention to serve as a bridge between the two cultures — the Hebrew and the German — was manifested in the periodical.

However, it is obvious from the contents of the journal that the editors’ main objective was to foster creativity in the Hebrew language and to facilitate an on-going discussion on relevant issues concerning Jews and Judaism in social, cultural, religious and educational spheres. And indeed,

¹⁷ *Hame'asef*, I (1783/4), p. 26.

the editors were able to publish 21 poems in the first volume out of a total of 120 different items published in that volume, as shown in the *Hame'asef* Index which I published.¹⁸ Poetry was considered very important, and the section of poetry was first in each issue. It was the declared purpose of the journal to facilitate the publication of such creative works and serve as a vehicle for the group of Maskilim who joined the newly established literary center and other writers. The belletristic contributions to the first volume of *Hame'asef* were manifested in 15 fables, a popular genre at that time, and three stories. Ten of the total works in different genres were translations from German and English. Two biographies were included in the first volume, intended to highlight significant personalities in Jewish history. The editors were able to attract major Hebrew writers, such as Naphtali Herz Wessely, Isaac Satanow, David Franco Mendes, Joel Brill and Hayim Cöslin who contributed to the journal.

Yet it was the figure of another Maskil, the enlightener *par excellence* of Jewish Haskalah, Moses Mendelssohn, that dominated the periodical as the spiritual leader of the movement. His name was constantly cited as an outstanding personality in his time who achieved recognition and acceptance among gentiles and Jews alike for his outstanding contributions to scholarship and philosophy, resulting in the new attitude toward the Jews. Similarly, the Maskilim glorified the image of the second esteemed leader of the Haskalah, Naphtali Herz Wessely, highlighting his proposals in *Divrei Shalom Ve'emet* (Words of Peace and Truth) to introduce innovations to Jewish education.

The first volume of the journal reflected the three main areas of Haskalah's platform of change: Jewish education, the Hebrew language, and the Bible. These three topics dominated the first volume: there were six entries on education, six – on the Hebrew language, 15 items on biblical commentaries, and two on biblical translation into German.

Structurally, the journal comprised the following departments: A. Poetry — and creative writings in prose as well; B. Essays — on Hebrew linguistics; C. The Life Story of the Greatest of Israel — biographies; D. Current Events — news; and E. ‘An Announcement of New Books’ — short reviews and announcements of newly published books. A special section was allocated to questions and answers regarding commentaries of

¹⁸ Pelli, *Sha'ar Lahaskalah*, Annotated Index of *Hame'asef*, First Modern Periodical in Hebrew (1783–1811). The Index is an annotated, computerized index to the first 18th-century Hebrew journal, *Hame'asef*, with cross-references to items republished in *Bikurei Ha'itim* (1820–1831), which was published in Vienna. This author and subject index is a comprehensive bibliography, covering all articles, literary pieces and items, included in all sections and departments of the journal. Annotations were inserted, authors identified, initials deciphered, and cross-references provided. A monograph on *Hame'asef* is included in the book.

difficult biblical verses and also riddles sent by readers and their answers. These sections were permanent features published in the same order in each issue.

The journal expressed the ideology of the Haskalah as manifested in the Maskilim's essays and creative writing. They were engaged in some public controversies, such as the burial of the dead issue, as the Maskilim sided with the authorities to delay the burial of Jews, contrary to the halachic practice, in order to avoid the risk of a 'premature' burial.¹⁹

Thus, the Maskilim expressed their interest in halachic matters, stating in effect that they had the expertise to review matters of Halachah in an authoritative manner very much like the rabbis, as discussed in chapter one. Indeed, they were able to quote from traditional sources, showing that the original Halachah was flexible enough to entertain dual and at times contradicting legal orientations. Such was the quoted statement "*Elu va'elu divrei elohim hayim*" (The two sides [expressing conflicting views] are stating the words of a living god), implying that both sides of a halachic dispute may be right.

The following volumes continued the same ideological trends, although the tone of the Maskilim became more critical in their treatment of the rabbinic authorities. Mendelssohn's death was recorded in the third volume (1786), as the Maskilim mourned and eulogized the passing of the exemplary figure in Jewish life. Subsequently, Isaac Euchel published a book-long biography of Mendelssohn, serialized first in *Hame'asef*, which glorified his personality as "Precious in his generation, unique among his people."²⁰ In that volume Euchel raised the issue of the *piyutim*, the liturgy, which were said to deviate from proper grammatical Hebrew. Likewise, there was a demand to introduce some changes into the services and especially into the prayer book, in addition to the Maskilim's overall plan to reform Jewish education. Following Wessely's educational reforms, they advocated to revise the religious curricula and to add secular studies.

The continuous tension between the Maskilim and the rabbinic establishment created rifts among the Maskilim themselves and the Society of the Seekers of the Hebrew Language underwent an identity crisis as a result of which the journal ceased publication for a year. It resumed its regular publication in 1788 with the announcement of the change in the name of its society, expanding the scope of its goals beyond Hebrew to include enlighteners who were not versed in that language.²¹

¹⁹ On the burial controversy see *The Age of Haskalah*, pp. 207–211.

²⁰ Itzik Euchel, *Toldot Rabenu Hehacham Moshe Ben Menahem* [The Life Story of Our Rabbi the Sage M.B.M.] (Berlin, 1789), on the title page.

²¹ *Shoharei Hatov Vehatshiyah* — The Society of the Seekers of Goodness and Virtue, or: Resourcefulness.

These changes affected also the editorial policies of the journal, as evidenced from the fourth volume on. Various departments were added to the journal and new, updated aesthetic-poetic concepts, based on the changes occurring in German literature, were introduced as well. Such is the literary classification of the genre of the fable as an independent kind of literature which is not part of poetry, as was the case till then.

Two major works of fiction which were published in the 1790s ought to be highlighted: Euchel's epistolary fiction “*Igrot Meshulam Ben Uriyah Ha'eshtemoi*” (The Letters of Meshulam Son of Uriah Ha'eshtemoi) (1790) and Wolfsohn's Dialogue of the Dead, “*Sihah Be'eretz Hahayim*” (Dialogue in the Land of the Living = the Dead) (1794–1797).²² Both are said to be of a lasting literary value.

The publication of “*Sihah Be'eretz Hahayim*” created a major controversy and consequently the journal ceased publication again, this time for over a decade, only to be revived in 1809 by Shalom Hacohen, a poet and a writer. It survived for three years, continuing in the footsteps of its predecessor, advocating modernity and secularism. The last three volumes of *Hame'asef* manifested the attempts of the editors and the Maskilim to further disseminate the ideology of Haskalah and to provide a platform for writers and poets to publish their works. The editor solicited the blessing of a known Hebrew poet, Shlomo Pappenheim, as his predecessors had sought Wessely for his patronage and authoritative advice. He also enlisted several new and upcoming Hebrew writers to contribute to the journal. Among them were, in addition to Pappenheim, Baruch Linda, David Friedrichsfeld, Moshe Mendelssohn-Frankfurt and David Caro, not to mention the editor himself and his contributions. In subsequent years, Shlomo Loewisohn and Moses Phillipson sent in their works as well.

There was a feeling of progress and achievement in the revived publication of the journal. It was depicted by the editor as the revival of the Hebrew language in the same spirit of the pronouncements by the former editors. And indeed, the editor was able to surpass the subscriptions of the older *Hame'asef*, getting from 250 to 300 subscribers to the Hebrew journal. The editor's proclivity toward poetry, being a poet himself, is noted in the number of poems published in the first renewed volume of the journal. Similarly, there was a growing interest in disseminating secular studies and promoting secular education. It is manifested by the increase in the number and scope of articles on Jewish history in these volumes.

²² Isaac Euchel, “*Igrot Meshulam Ben Uriyah Ha'eshtemoi*” [The Letters of Meshulam Son of Uriah Ha'eshtemoi], *Hame'asef*, VI (1790), pp. 38–50, 80–85, 171–176, 245–249; Aaron Wolfsohn, “*Sihah Be'eretz Hahayim*” [Dialogue in the Land of the Living = the Dead], *Hame'asef*, VII (1794–1797), pp. 54–67, 120–153, 203–228, 279–298.

Under the circumstances, the journal could not avoid discussing controversial issues such as religious reforms raised at the consistory in Westphalia.²³ Whether this was the cause of its final demise or the lack of literary material, the journal ceased publication in 1811, its third year of renewed publication. Thus ends the complex and difficult plight of the first modern periodical in Hebrew.

Belles Lettres and General Subjects in Hame'asef

Assessing the ten volumes of *Hame'asef*, one is impressed by the literary and the nonfiction output of early Haskalah. Its variety of literary forms and genres, and the multiplicity of subjects discussed in it, make the journal an important source about the period, the Maskilim, and their aspirations.

From a literary point of view, it is possible to notice the formation of modern Hebrew literature in its variety of literary genres and kinds of literature and its writers' attempt to write creatively in the revived Hebrew language.²⁴

Poetry was the most popular kind of literature in *Hame'asef*, and the editors considered it as the pinnacle of Hebrew creative efforts. The literary theoreticians of the Haskalah elaborated on the poetics and aesthetic of Hebrew poetry, and even though they concentrated on biblical poetry, there were ramifications also about the aesthetics of modern Hebrew poetry.

Among the sub-categories of the 122 poems published in the journal there were poems on nature, and poems of friendship, morality and rebuke, religious and synagogue poetry, poems praising rulers and Haskalah leaders, and timely and occasional poems. Eleven out of 122 were translations from other European languages, especially German. In assessing the quality of these poems, one should note that many of them were written in the manner of the time in German literature. Some of them may be remembered as distinguished in the artistic use of their Hebrew expression, their sensitivity, and in their poetic and linguistic use of rich biblical style. They represent two trends in contemporary Hebrew letters: a desire to continue the existing styles and forms in the corpus of Jewish poetry, as well as an attempt to adopt new forms of poetic expressions and language of the sublime borrowed from European literature.

At that time, these poems were read enthusiastically, and were highly regarded as exemplary poetry because they attempted to adhere to the poetics of the period. Their aesthetic concept of poetry combined beauty and the sublime, incorporating beneficial ideas and the notion of goodness.

²³ *Hame'asef*, IX¹ (1810), pp. 9–21.

²⁴ On the various genres, see Moshe Pelli, *Sugot Vesugyot Besifrut Hahaskalah Ha'ivrit* [Kinds of Genre in Haskalah Literature: Types and Topics] (Israel, 1999); Pelli, *In Search of Genre: Hebrew Enlightenment and Modernity*.

The prose part in *Hame'asef* was not too large: out of a total of 1,000 different items included in the ten volumes, there were eighteen stories published. Among them were four idylls in prose, eight moral stories, seven fable-like stories, three biblical stories, three epistolary prose pieces, and thirteen dialogues. Seven of the stories were translated or adapted from German literature. These prose writings are very interesting because they represent attempts to create modern fiction which followed the traditional corpus of existing Hebrew letters or the current mode in European literatures.

The fables constituted another frequent genre that the editors published in *Hame'asef*, following the current trend in European literatures as well as the existing trend in Hebrew letters. There were 55 fables published that are classified as Aesopian, narrative fables, parables, and allegories. Ten of the fables were adaptations from classical and non-Hebraic contemporary sources, and some from Hebrew tradition. Some of the fables served in lieu of satire, which the editors tried at first to avoid following the dictates of Wessely.

Additional genres published in *Hame'asef*: proverbs (94 items), riddles (26), literary criticism (52), and biographies (10).

General topics: Among the topics discussed in *Hame'asef* there were some 47 items related to the Hebrew language. Other major areas of interest included biblical topics and textual commentaries, which covered numerous items occupying seven long columns in the Index — more than any other topic. Education, a major vehicle for change, had 31 items (articles, news), and history — some 29 of which 13 were on Jewish themes and others on ancient history: Egyptian, Babylonian, Greek and Roman. In sciences, the Index contains 28 articles — on physics, biology, natural phenomena, and the calendar. Similarly, there were some 29 items of news and 25 entries on the Jewish community.

The Reception of *Hame'asef* in the Nineteenth Century

The reception of the first journal of Hebrew Haskalah corresponded in the most part to that of the early Haskalah in the nineteenth century. For, in many respects, *Hame'asef* represented the essential components of the beginning of modern Haskalah in the last quarter of the eighteenth century.

As we have seen in chapter two, after the demise of *Hame'asef*, there were attempts to emulate it at the end of the eighteenth century and in the second decade of the nineteenth.²⁵ It was followed by the second journal, *Bikurei Ha'itim*, in 1820, which published recycled material from *Hame'asef*, at readers' demand. And in the 1860s, Meir Halevi Letteris published a second

²⁵ See chapter two, the section on the reception of *Hame'asef*.

edition of the first volume of *Hame'asef* (1783), highly praising its editor, Isaac Euchel, and the early Maskilim.

The attitude changed in the 1860s with the emergence of the school of criticism in Hebrew letters. As we have seen in chapter five on the *melitzah*, the new generation of critics, Avraham Uri Kovner, Avraham Yaakov Papirna, and later on Peretz Smolenskin, waged an attack on the literature of early Haskalah and especially on the journal *Hame'asef*, although some acknowledged its role in the history of Hebrew literature. Other attacks followed in the 1890s.

In spite of this critical attitude toward *Hame'asef* at the latter part of the nineteenth century, there were voices that acknowledged the great contribution it made and the major changes it affected on Hebrew culture. Shalom Yaakov Abramovich had high praise for *Hame'asef* which enabled a group of writers to publish their works, and he fully supported the writings of the early Maskilim.²⁶

²⁶ Shalom Yaakov Abramovich in the introduction, “Et Ledaber” [Time to Talk], to his book *Toldot Hateva* [The Story of Nature], III (Vilna, 1873), p. xxv.

CHAPTER SEVEN:

BIKUREI HA'ITIM: THE HEBREW PERIODICAL OF THE HASKALAH IN GALICIA

“*Bikurei Ha'itim* are the First Fruits...
Which Include Some Nice Things
and Matters of Knowledge and Benefit” (title page)

The demise of *Hame'asef*, the journal of the early Haskalah in Germany in 1811, discussed in chapter six, signaled the end of the thirty year literary and cultural activities of the first center of Hebrew Enlightenment.

Nine years after *Hame'asef* ceased publication, a new Hebrew periodical was published in another center of Haskalah that began to emerge.

Bikurei Ha'itim (First Fruits of the Times), the second major Hebrew periodical of the Haskalah in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, was published in Vienna in 12 consecutive volumes from 1820 to 1831.

Its story signifies the reception and acceptance of the early Haskalah in its new center in Austria in the third decade of the nineteenth century and afterwards.

It was initiated by Anton Schmid, the owner of a printing press and publisher of Hebrew books, in consultation with Shalom Hacohen (1771–1845), the last editor of *Hame'asef*, which was the first Hebrew journal published in Germany intermittently from 1783 to 1811. Hacohen, an accomplished poet, writer and a Haskalah activist, became the journal's editor.

Some critics considered *Bikurei Ha'itim* to be a direct continuation of *Hame'asef*, notwithstanding the difference in style and contents. The launching of the Viennese journal marked the transition of the center of Hebrew Haskalah literature from Germany to the Austrian Empire.

The pages of the new periodical attest to the transition of the ‘center of gravity’ to Vienna as the Galician Maskilim were attempting to establish their own version of the Haskalah. Having gotten their ideology from

Berlin, they endeavored to translate it to the needs of the new locality and the new circumstances. In the 1820s, *Bikurei Ha'itim* became the central organ of publication for established and aspiring Haskalah writers who were destined to make a name for themselves in years to come. By tracing their works in *Bikurei Ha'itim*, it is possible to follow the developmental processes of these writers and of the Galician school in its formative years.

Bikurei Ha'itim represented the ‘first fruits’ harvested by the Maskilim in the Austrian Empire, ranging from Galicia to Moravia and also to Italy. Their creative writings, as well as their intellectual and scholarly essays in Judaica and Hebraica and in the humanities and the sciences, can be found in the journal. Their works covered a diversified range of topics and disciplines such as literature, language, Scripture commentary, history, science, and education. As a semi-scholarly journal, *Bikurei Ha'itim* also published essays on ethics, religion and philosophy as well as learned biographies of past Jewish luminaries, especially in the field of Jewish scholarship.

All in all, this periodical facilitated a glimpse into the Hebrew Enlightenment in the Austro-Hungarian Empire as the Galician Haskalah attempted to disseminate the Haskalah ideology it inherited from the Berlin Center. Like its German predecessor, its main goal was to resuscitate the Jewish people by reviving the Hebrew language and its literature and by modernizing and updating Hebrew culture. In general, the Haskalah attempted to create bridges between the Jews and the European Enlightenment believing in the emerging new age of the brotherhood of men, tolerance, freedom, and sole reliance on man’s reason, among other things.

To understand the phenomenon of *Bikurei Ha'itim* one ought to examine the background that led to its publication in Austria and to the transition of the center of the Haskalah from Germany to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. As part of the review of its background, several periodicals that were published elsewhere after *Hame'asef* had been closed down should be probed for possible influence on *Bikurei Ha'itim*.

The Transition of the Haskalah from Germany to Austria

Some of the cultural trends that developed among the Maskilim in Germany since the demise of *Hame'asef* first in 1797 and then in 1811, may shed light on the emergence of the Haskalah in Austria and consequently on the launching of the periodical *Bikurei Ha'itim*. The folding of *Hame'asef* came as a result of the changes in cultural needs of the intellectual elite among the Maskilim who increasingly resorted to the use of German and German culture and literature instead of Hebrew. This trend is documented in the correspondence between the first editor of *Hame'asef*, Isaac Euchel (1756–

1804), and its last editor, Shalom Hacohen, and in the writings of the contemporary Maskil Juda Leib Ben Zeev, among others.¹

Nevertheless, there were attempts to revive that Hebrew journal. First, in 1799, there was an unsuccessful attempt, as Hacohen prompted Euchel to assume again the editorship of *Hame'asef*. Then, in 1809, Hacohen himself launched the new *Hame'asef*, which continued publication for three years, till 1811. Seven years after the closing of the journal, in 1818, there was an attempt to publish selections from *Hame'asef*, a plan that most probably did not materialize.²

The emergence of the Haskalah in Austria is said to have been a gradual process, following in the footsteps of the Berlin Haskalah, although it eventually took a somewhat different path. While the early buds of the Haskalah in Austria could be traced to the Tolerance Edict of Joseph II in 1782, some other trends facilitated the introduction of the Haskalah to the empire.

Two institutions that became active in Vienna in these years led to the growing interest in the Haskalah. They were the Hebrew printing presses that employed Hebrew proofreaders and editors, the beginning of modern Hebrew schools, and the practice of private Hebrew tutoring. Both institutions attracted noted Hebrew writers and educators, the carriers of Hebrew culture, to Vienna. These Hebraists were instrumental in cultivating Hebrew culture in their new place. Among them were prominent Maskilim, such as Shmuel Romanelli, Juda Ben Zeev, Shlomo Loewisohn, and Meir Obernik.

They are said to have been the founders of the Haskalah in Vienna.³

When Shalom Hacohen came to Vienna in 1820 at the invitation of Anton Schmid to become a proofreader and an editor, he found the ground prepared for launching a journal, following somewhat in the footsteps of *Hame'asef*.

¹ Shalom Hacohen, *Ktav Yosher* [An Epistle of Righteousness] (Vienna, 1820), pp. 95–96; Juda Leib Ben Zeev, *Otzar Hashorashim* [Treasure of Roots] (Vienna, 1807), p. 18. See chapter three on Isaac Euchel's letter to Shalom Hacohen.

² *Ankündigung für Freunde der hebräischen Litteratur* (Berlin, 1818), a fifteen page pamphlet bound at the end of the New *Hame'asef* (1809) edited by Shalom Hacohen which I found at the State Library of Berlin. The announcement was published also as “Ankündigung für Freunde der hebräischen Litteratur,” *Jedidja*, II, 1 (1, 1818), pp. 117–122, without the excerpts in Hebrew.

³ See Moshe Pelli, *Bikurei Ha'itim – Bikurei Hahaskalah* [*Bikurei Ha'itim* – The ‘First Fruits’ of Haskalah]: An Annotated Index to *Bikurei Ha'itim*, the Hebrew Journal of the Haskalah in Galicia (1820–1831) (Jerusalem, 2005), pp. 21–24. A preliminary, shorter version of this chapter was included in my book on *Bikurei Ha'itim* as an English abstract.

Phenomena of Jewish and Hebrew Periodicals in the Early 19th Century

While this is the generally accepted overview of the backdrop leading to the appearance of *Bikurei Ha'itim*, I undertook to examine some other phenomena on the Jewish publications scene that I believe had some bearing on the launching of *Bikurei Ha'itim*.

The first phenomenon is the publication of several Jewish journals that attempted to fill the lacuna of the demised Hebrew journal, *Hame'asef*. In 1806, between closure of the first *Hame'asef* in 1797 and its renewal in 1809, two Jewish educators, David Fraenkel (1779–1865) and Joseph Wolf (1772–1826), published a German periodical, *Sulamith*.⁴ It undertook to promote culture and humanism among the “Jewish nation” and to advocate brotherhood and tolerance. In addition to the bulk of material in German, *Sulamith* also published poems and articles in Hebrew. Its interest in Hebrew was also manifested in articles in German which were dedicated to leading Haskalah authors such as N. H. Wessely and Juda Ben Zeev. In addition, the journal published bi-lingual poems by Shalom Hacohen. *Sulamith* was intended to serve the remnants of the Hebrew Maskilim who wished to read a Hebrew periodical or were nostalgic about *Hame'asef* and its authors.

The second German Jewish periodical was *Jedidja*, published first in 1817 by Jeremiah Heinemann (1778–1855), as a religious, ethical and pedagogic quarterly.⁵ It, too, carried articles and poems in Hebrew, and was intended as well to serve Hebrew Maskilim.

Meanwhile in Amsterdam, the Hebrew society *Hevrat To'elet* (Beneficent Society) launched a Hebrew periodical, *Bikurei To'elet* (The First Fruits of Benefit), in 1820,⁶ prior to the publication of *Bikurei Ha'itim*.

These three periodicals must have been on the desks of Shalom Hacohen and Anton Schmid when they were contemplating their plans to publish a new Hebrew journal in Austria. Unquestionably, the orientation of these periodicals, the nature of the material they published and their content, and the service that they rendered to the German and Hebrew reading public prompted the publisher and editor to undertake a similar enterprise in Austria. Apparently, the very title of the Amsterdam periodical *Bikurei To'elet* had influenced the editor's decision to use a similar title for *Bikurei Ha'itim*.

Announcing the Launching of an Annual and a Calendar

In March 1820, Schmid announced that he was going to publish a calendar,

⁴ *Sulamith*, Herausgegeben von D. Fränkel und Wolf (Leipzig, 1806).

⁵ *Jedidja*, eine religiöse, moralische und pädagogische Zeitschrift, I, 1 (1817).

⁶ *Bikurei To'elet* [The First Fruits of Benefit] (Amsterdam, 1820).

titled *Itim Mezumanim* (Occasional Times), and an annual publication by the name of *Bikurei Ha'itim*. The simultaneous publication of the annual and the calendar attests to an innovative concept. These two publications were interrelated and interdependent, a view that has not been discussed so far in any critical writing on *Bikurei Ha'itim*.

To understand this innovative concept, the contemporary phenomenon of the publication of Jewish pocket calendars was examined. The contents, style and essence of some calendars were studied with particular attention given to Joseph Perl's (1773–1839) special calendar, *Zir Ne'eman* (Trusty Messenger). It was published in 1814–1816, with a literary section titled “Lu'ah Halev” (Tablet of the Heart).⁷ This combination of a calendar which included a literary section is said to have impacted the editorial decision of the editor and publisher of *Bikurei Ha'itim* regarding the nature and contents of their envisioned journal.

Thus, it appears that at its inception *Bikurei Ha'itim* was planned as an almanac, incorporating general data, business and practical information with intellectual and literary material. It was intended to combine literature and commerce, knowledge and practical data. The impact of Perl's calendar on *Bikurei Ha'itim* and its calendar is evident in the similarity in general concept and content. Additionally, some items in Perl's calendar and literary supplement were emulated in *Bikurei Ha'itim* and in *Itim Mezumanim*. The calendar and the journal supplemented and complemented each other, thus having almanac materials published also in *Bikurei Ha'itim*.

This editorial concept behind the publications lasted for the first two years, 1820 and 1821. After the second year, the calendar ceased publication, while the editorial concept of the journal changed gradually with the replacement of editors following the initial editorship of Shalom Hacohen. Thus, the journal assumed a different editorial course which transformed it into the major Haskalah outlet in the third decade of the century for creativity and research done by Hebrew writers in the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Volumes 1–3 (1820–1822): Under the Editorship of Shalom Hacohen

Bikurei Ha'itim under Shalom Hacohen's editorship was a far cry from *Hame'asef* in its editorial concept and the material it published. The title page identified the periodical as a useful and educational book for business and enjoyment, containing *belles lettres*, general knowledge and practical material.⁸ Structurally, *Bikurei Ha'itim* was divided into three major

⁷ *Zir Ne'eman* [Trusty Messenger] (1814–1816); “Lu'ah Halev” [Tablet of the Heart] (1814–1816). See Pelli, *Bikurei Ha'itim – Bikurei Hahaskalah*, pp. 31–34.

⁸ *Bikurei Ha'itim*, I (1820/1), on the title page.

sections. The first section was titled ‘Learning and Enjoyment,’⁹ containing a few departments, and most of the material in it was in German with Hebrew characters. Its first department contained articles on subjects and major figures in Jewish history, especially in Second Temple Judaism, attesting to the importance of the study of history, as advocated by the Haskalah.

The second department in that section was devoted to biographies. One biography featured Isaac Abravanel and another was on Moses Mendelssohn, both luminaries who were similarly highlighted in *Hame’asef*. The third department was devoted to moral stories from the Talmud, highlighting the great ethical stature of the talmudic sages of yore. Thus, these selections testified to the Maskilim’s positive attitude toward the Talmud, contrary to the prevailing notion that the Maskilim were highly critical of it.¹⁰

A special department in *Bikurei Ha’itim* included reprints of original selections from *Hame’asef*. The nature of the selection was never discussed in the critical literature, however, in examining the contents of the recycled material it is possible to find the reasons for such inclusion.

The inclusion of material from *Hame’asef* is attributed to readers’ demand for stuff from *Hame’asef*, which was out of print and its copies were not readily available. Also, the Maskilim had great reverence for the ‘founding fathers’ of the Haskalah and held their ground-breaking monthly in high esteem, as described in chapters two and six. Omitted from the recycling of *Hame’asef* material were book reviews and announcements on forthcoming new books, either because they were irrelevant, or in competition with Schmid’s own published books.

This practice of printing material from *Hame’asef* continued for eight volumes and then it discontinued. All in all, there were some 207 items reprinted from *Hame’asef*.

The second major section was titled ‘Notes from the Fatherland.’¹¹ It contained articles and informative pieces about the progress that Jews had made in culture, education and industry, and their contribution to the Austrian Empire. This section manifested the desire of the editor and the publisher to impart information which was relevant to those who wanted to see Jewish society contribute to the well-being of the state. These then are the innovations introduced by the editor and the publisher as part of their new concepts of amalgamating the journal and the calendar.

The third major section had the title ‘Practical and Diversified

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁰ See Moshe Pelli, *The Age of Haskalah: Studies in Hebrew Literature of the Enlightenment in Germany* (Lanham, 2006; revised edition), p. 133, n. 5. ch. III, on the Talmud, pp. 48–72.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

Information.¹² It presented tax tables, interest rates and coin exchange, holiday dates, and geographical distances between major cities in Europe. This section was geared to business people with some Enlightenment inclination, whom the editor and publisher wanted to attract as subscribers to the journal.

Some aspects of volume one were not known to scholars because most available copies of this volume in research libraries are missing 48 pages. Also the calendar *Itim Mezumanim* is rare and is found only in very few libraries.¹³ The missing pages contain additional important and useful information printed for the benefit of business people.¹⁴ For example, the timetable of the postal carriages, lists of major European markets and fairs, interest calculation tables as well as practical and useful information about market days in major European cities, weather forecasts, tariff and interest data, and blank lines for income and expenses. It also included important Hebrew and general calendar dates and listed Jewish holidays and synagogue customs. This calendar was much richer and diversified than the regular pocket calendars that were published at the time. Yet, its size and format were larger than the pocket calendars, which made it more of an almanac, but less convenient to carry, and more expensive.

Some almanac material was intentionally included in *Bikurei Ha'itim* and not in the calendar in order to implement the editor's policy.

The dominant material in volume one was printed in German with Hebrew letters, which is typical of the other two volumes under the editorship of Shalom Hacohen. Out of 256 pages in volume one, only 79 were in Hebrew and they contained mostly material from *Hame'asef*. Evidently, the contributions of local Hebrew writers were actually minimal. Aside from the editor, Shalom Hacohen, only three other writers contributed material to volume one. They were Shlomo Yehudah Rapoport (1790–1867) and Meir Halevi Letteris (1800–1871), both starting their creative writing careers, who were destined to become prominent in the Haskalah. They contributed translations of poetry, while another participant, the preacher Gotthold Salomon, published a sermon.

Editorially, the second volume followed in the path of the first one with the same sections and departments, starting with Jewish history, biographies and moral stories from the Talmud. A large section of recycled material from *Hame'asef* followed, and then a small section of original contributions. They included several poems, an adaptation of an idyll and an article about natural science. The poems accentuated a few recurring motifs that were repeated in other volumes of the journal. Among them were the

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 185.

¹³ *Itim Mezumanim* [Occasional Times] for the years 1820/1, 1821/2; see Pelli, *Bikurei Ha'itim – Bikurei Hahaskalah*, pp. 34–37.

¹⁴ These missing materials are now listed in the Index and are discussed in the Introduction. See Pelli, *Bikurei Ha'itim – Bikurei Hahaskalah*, pp. 34–37.

poets' expressions of their *Weltschmerz*, and their complaints about suffering and the agony of living. Concurrently, the poets also addressed the question of theodicy, expressing their total vindication of the Almighty vis-à-vis their suffering. Compared to the previous volume, there was a slight increase in original contributions totaling three local writers.

Volume three exhibited some changes. The material recycled from *Hame'asef* became more dominant (93 pages), and the section of the original contributions was expanded to 57 pages. The editor's efforts to recruit more local writers were manifested in the growing number of local contributors to this volume.

Among the new contributors was Moshe Landau, the prominent Jewish community leader in Prague and grandson of the renowned Rabbi Yechezkel Landau, known as '*Hanoda Bihudah*,' after his book by this title, who joined the group of writers contributing to the journal. Landau, who became the editor of the journal in the following year, contributed an article on the ancient education of the Hebrews.¹⁵ Another prominent figure in Jewish education and communal life in the empire and a veteran Maskil, Herz Homberg, published an article against the practice of *Halitzah*, the ceremonial release from Levirate Marriage, thus advocating religious reform.¹⁶ One more contributor was the prolific writer and leader of the Jewish community in Prague, Juda Jeiteles, who later became an editor of volumes eleven and twelve of *Bikurei Ha'itim*. He made several contributions in a few genres to the journal throughout the years, and published five items in this issue. In one of his typical poems, Jeiteles described Spring, the season of nature's renewal, as a metaphor for the renewal in human relations. Spring has 'sprung' in many *Bikurei Ha'itim* poems also as a metaphor for the envisioned renewal of the Jewish people. In addition to poems, Jeiteles also wrote epigrams, a genre that was prevalent in *Hame'asef*, and was revived in *Bikurei Ha'itim*.

Among the other participants was Shlomo Pergament, who later became the editor of volume six, publishing a *piyut*-like poem titled "Faith," and Shlomo Rapoport, still in his belletristic period, with an adaptation of an idyllic poem by Gottfried Bürger in praise of living a pure life in nature.¹⁷ Another writer of note was Isaac Erter (1791–1851), the Galician satirist, who started his satiric writing by publishing his first anti-Hasidic piece, "Moznei Mishkal" (Scale), in this issue.¹⁸ It was the only satire published in the twelve volumes of *Bikurei Ha'itim*, whose editorial policy seemed to follow a moderate line of Haskalah. Indeed, *Bikurei Ha'itim* was much less critical than *Hame'asef* in its most combative period. Erter's satire represented the anti-Hasidic tone that emanated from the Galician

¹⁵ *Bikurei Ha'itim*, III (1822/3), pp. 5–9.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 113–116.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 130–131, 133–139.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 166–169.

Haskalah. In this volume, his last as editor, Hacohen managed to attract ten contributors, some of whom were cited above.

Hacohen's tenure as editor of the first three volumes of *Bikurei Ha'itim* (1820–1822) was not impressive at all, and the 'first fruits' that he offered were not always ripe. He did not break any new grounds, the practical almanac notwithstanding, either in restating and redefining the Haskalah and its ideology, or in any significant literary work. He did not excel here either as editor, poet, or as a Haskalah activist, and he could only be credited for helping initiate the journal and carrying on the fledgling tradition of the Hebrew press to Austria.

Volumes 4–5 (1823–1824): Under the Editorship of Moshe Landau

Upon Shalom Hacohen's stepping down as editor, Schmid needed a recognized figure in Hebrew letters to lead the journal. He chose Moshe Landau (1788–1852), who, as mentioned above, was well known in Jewish life as a communal leader and the supervisor of the German Jewish school in Prague. He was also an accomplished scholar and a noted Hebraist.¹⁹

Landau introduced a major revision in the orientation of the journal by eliminating its previous commercial, business and practical preference. He now concentrated on intellectual and literary pursuits, and undertook to educate the readers in matters related to ethics and knowledge. The title 'Learning and Enjoyment' was taken from the title page of the first section in previous volumes and now placed on the title page of the journal as its newly refocused orientation. However, the general structure of the journal had changed a little. Its first part occupied 190 pages, representing two-third of the volume, which consisted of original contributions. It included articles, essays, studies, poems, prayers, fables, and epigrams both in Hebrew and in German.

The new editor was able to recruit additional contributors from all parts of the empire. Some of them were accomplished writers or active Maskilim, such as Rabbi Aaron Chorin, Baruch Schönfeld, Bernard Schlesinger, and Yaakov Shmuel Byk. Ideas of tolerance and fellowship of man as based on Judaic values were promoted in this issue as they have been discussed by Haskalah thinkers since its inception.

Landau himself published the second part of an article on the educational background of the ancient Hebrews.²⁰ It was intended to present Judaism as an enlightened religion since its early genesis and its adherents as having high regards for education.

The scope of articles varied from a study by Rapoport of the Jews in Arabia and Africa²¹ to a historic depiction of the thirty-year war and its

¹⁹ Moshe Landau, *He'aruch* [Thesaurus] (Prague, [1819]).

²⁰ *Bikurei Ha'itim*, IV (1823/4), pp. 44–51.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 51–77.

impact on the Jews of Prague. The former intended to impart a sense of the wider Jewish community beyond the confines of European Jewry, and to promote the notion of Jewish unity and Jewish brotherhood. Covering Jewish religious life, attention was given to sermons and to prayers. One such sermon in German by the preacher Gotthold Salomon, delivered at the controversial Hamburg Reform Temple, which opened the gate to religious reforms in Germany, was printed in this issue. The sermon itself, however, did not advocate reform at all. Similarly, the editor included prayers for special occasions in Hebrew and their translation into German. This practice expressed the editor's and the readers' interest in religious affairs as well as the desire to inform the public on dedication of new synagogues.

Many of the contributors to the journal resorted to poetry, a literary kind that attracted a large number of aspiring young writers. Some of the poems were adaptations into Hebrew from the 'canonical' tradition of German literature in the previous century, apparently emulating the orientation of *Hame'asef*. Such were the adaptations of poems by Herder and Klopstock. By these adaptations, the Maskilim attempted to show that Hebrew, their revived language, was suitable to render the best of German poetry. This goal characterized the Maskilim's translations in the early period as well. To make German poetry more palatable to the Hebrew readers, some times such translations underwent a Jewish 'conversion' by relating them, for example, to a rabbinic phrase in the Midrash or to a motto based on Scriptures.

A great number of the original poems focused on nature's seasons, especially Spring, which one poet, Baruch Schönfeld (1787–1852), compared to phases in man's life. Some ambiguity is noted in the religious outlook expressed in these poems. In one poem, Schönfeld affirmed the belief in the immortality of the soul in the afterlife. Yet, in another poem, he was referring to the temporality of man, following the notion held by this modern Maskil that one's existence ends with the end of life.²²

The editor opened each issue with a leading article of some importance, although not yet an editorial, which came in later issues. In volume four he published Rabbi Aaron Chorin's (1766–1844) Socratic dialogue between Hillel and Yohanan ben Zakai, which focused on Judaic values.²³ According to this imaginary dialogue, since early times, classical Judaism has been advocating love of humanity, the proper conduct, and the way to achieve perfection. This is how the Haskalah perceived and presented Judaism as an enlightened religion. In volume five, the editor printed as a leading article, selections from Mendel Lefin's (1749–1826) translation into Hebrew of Maimonides' *Moreh Nevuchim* (Guide for the Perplexed). As noted in a footnote, Lefin's writing was selected because of his association with the early Haskalah, with Mendelssohn and *Hame'asef*. Thus, he embodied the

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 165–166.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 2–43.

very transition from the Haskalah in Germany to the Galician Haskalah. Likewise, Maimonides was a good choice because his philosophical writings played a pivotal role in guiding the perplexed enlighteners toward rationalism and the Haskalah.²⁴

In volume five, Landau introduced an innovation by publishing a supplement in German with Gothic letters, the first and the only such publication. Evidently, he tried to follow in the steps of *Hame'asef* in its German supplement, and probably aimed to expand the potential readership of the journal.

In his two years as editor, Landau improved the periodical, increased the Hebrew materials and expanded the journal's circle of writers and contributors. He was able to galvanize the Maskilim's sense of identity around the journal as an ideological group having a common goal. As proponents of the Haskalah, they aspired — like their German predecessors — to introduce changes into Jewish society and culture, to modernize Judaism, and to advance their fellow Jews through education.

At the conclusion of the fifth volume, Schmid announced the end of Landau's tenure as editor. I attribute the reasons for this act to an emerging conflict of interest because Landau started his own competing business as a publisher and owner of a printing press in Prague.

Volume 6 (1825): The Editor — Shlomo Pergamenter

In 1825, Shlomo Pergamenter (1788?– ?), a Hebrew teacher who had published a grammar book in 1813,²⁵ was appointed as editor in charge of volume six. He made his mark on the journal by printing only Hebrew material throughout the issue, excluding any material in German. This change represented a major shift in the editorial policy of the journal and in the perceived identity of its target audience. Not only was the material written in Hebrew but many items were devoted to the Hebrew language. Emphatically, a poem on Hebrew and a call for creativity in Hebrew by the editor opened the issue.²⁶ Similarly, a Dialogue of the Dead — a revived literary genre from *Hame'asef* — had the Hebrew language as a character in a drama discuss the state of Hebrew with the noted Haskalah Hebraist Naphtali Herz Wessely.²⁷ Also, a major Italian Hebrew scholar, Shmuel David Luzzatto (1800–1865), starting to write for the journal, contributed an article on synonyms in Hebrew, and the introduction to his book, *Kinor*

²⁴ On Maimonides' impact on the Haskalah and the Maskilim, see Pelli, *The Age of Haskalah: Studies in Hebrew Literature of the Enlightenment in Germany*, p. 133, n. 5.

²⁵ Shlomo Pergamenter, *Yesodei Halashon* [Foundation of Language] (Vienna, 1832; first edition: 1813).

²⁶ *Bikurei Ha'itim*, VI (1825/6), pp. 3–4.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 5–24.

Na'im (Pleasant Harp), that was incorporated into this volume, focused on the Hebrew language.²⁸

In this issue, the number of contributors increased substantially. Eleven new participants were added to the roster of writers, joining nine others that had previously published in the journal. They came from Bohemia, Moravia, Hungary, Galicia and Italy, now representing the group of Hebrew writers in the Austrian Empire that was formed around *Bikurei Ha'itim*.

The dominant part in this issue was the section containing original contributions of local writers. It totaled 112 pages — excluding Luzzatto's 148-page *Kinor Na'im* of mostly poems — as compared to 80 pages in the previous issue. That section had 26 poems — more than ever before. As in previous issues, the themes of many poems expressed the sorrow, suffering and agony of their writers. Yet, a motif of hope also emerged. Three poems and one epigram were titled "Hatikvah" (Hope), a token of some optimistic outlook.²⁹ A few poets were inspired by biblical themes and notable figures, such as David, and even employed a neo-biblical style in their writings.

The editor continued to use a variety of literary genres, such as fables, a genre that appeared in previous issues, as well as new ones, such as riddles. He also published several biblical stories. Additionally, an article on corrections that needed to be introduced in the prayer book was included in that issue as well as commentaries on biblical verses.

Luzzatto's *Kinor Na'im*, that added 148 pages to this issue, contributed a variety of genres and styles to the journal. Among them were poems, *piyutim*, lamentations, epigrams, epitaphs, and translations from the classical Latin and Italian Renaissance literatures. Luzzatto's poetry and his other creative writings were superior in quality when compared to the material published in the periodical by other writers from the Austrian Empire.

Pergamenter edited the journal for one year, and then disappeared from Hebrew literature and reportedly turned to business.

Volumes 7–8 (1826–1827): The Editor — Bernhard Schlesinger

One of the active contributors, Bernhard Schlesinger (1773–1836), became the editor of *Bikurei Ha'itim* in 1826. He published 19 different items in the previous three issues. Ten years earlier, in 1816, he had authored an epic, *Hahashmonaim* (The Hasmoneans), and thus was considered an accomplished Hebrew writer.³⁰

The editor was successful in maintaining the number of contributors at

²⁸ *Ibid.*, *Kinor Na'im* [Pleasant Harp], pp. 1–148, in separate pagination.

²⁹ See for example the epigram, *Bikurei Ha'itim*, VI (1825/6), p. 76; poem: *ibid.*, pp. 77–78.

³⁰ Isachar Beer [Bernhard] Schlesinger, *Hahashmonaim* [The Hasmoneans] (Prague, 1816).

20, same as in the last issue, with 13 past contributors and 7 new ones. Yet, the material in this issue doubled in size as a result of longer articles by Luzzatto and the multiple number of items contributed by several writers.

The continuous influence of the Me'asfim, the writers and editors of *Hame'asef*, on the writers of *Bikurei Ha'itim* is noticeable in this issue. It is manifested in the latter's choice of genres and topics, the central topic in this issue being the immortality of the soul, a favorite subject of early Haskalah. A long philosophical dialogue was devoted to this topic as well as an equally long theological essay and a piece of descriptive reflection.³¹

A timely news item that was reported from New York attracted the attention of Juda Jeiteles. It was the report in the press on the journalist and diplomat Mordechai Manuel Noah's recent utopian plan to establish a Jewish "refuge" named Ararat at Grand Island in the Niagara River near Buffalo in upstate New York. Jeiteles' mindset concerning the possibility of an earthly *ge'ulah*, redemption, was expressed in his reaction to this news: he ridiculed Noah for his utopian plans. Simultaneously, Jeiteles expressed unwavering allegiance of his fellow Jews to the ruler of their country, ostensibly being apprehensive that a support of Noah's plans would be considered disloyalty to the State.³²

Under Schlesinger's editorship, the journal continued to publish biographies, a trend that had been established in previous issues. Previously, four biographies were recycled from *Hame'asef*, two were printed in German, and now a biography of Abraham Ibn Ezra appeared in this issue.³³ Other biographies were published in consecutive issues. As part of the Maskilim's efforts to rejuvenate the Hebrew language, the editor devoted a sizable portion of the issue to several articles on the Hebrew language. Luzzatto's eight learned studies on synonyms in Hebrew, consisting of 62 pages, filled about one-fifth of the whole issue. The journal continued to print commentaries on obscure verses in the Bible and on strange passages in the Talmud. At times, what seemed to be a naive discussion that could not transcend its immediate purpose of commentary might have been encoded with hidden messages. In one such instance, a writer discussed the passage from Psalms 119: 126: "*Et la'asot la-YHVH heferu toratecha*" (It is a time to act for the Lord for they have violated Your teaching). This verse with its talmudic interpretation, however, has been generally cited in the Haskalah by religious reformers with the intention to affirm the notion that religious changes were permitted in classical Judaism.³⁴

Poetry continued to feature similar themes in this issue of *Bikurei Ha'itim*. The motifs of Spring and hope were repeated by some epigones,³⁵

³¹ *Bikurei Ha'itim*, VII (1826/7), pp. 3–12, 12–29.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 45–49.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 49–55.

³⁴ See *The Age of Haskalah*, p. 45, notes 50, 51.

³⁵ For example, *Bikurei Ha'itim*, VII (1826/7), p. 113.

as was the theme of death that had become prevalent. Mendelssohn's figure, admired by contemporary *Bikurei Ha'itim* Maskilim as it had been in the German period, was prominent in poetry as well.

The eighth volume was distinguished by its scope of 323 pages plus 48 pages of selections from *Hame'asef*, as compared to 290 pages in the previous issue. Yet, there were only 13 contributors — 7 less than in the last issue — and the journal's size is explained by the multiplicity of items contributed by many participants. For example, Luzzatto contributed 12 items, 8 of which were on language and linguistics, encompassing some 80 pages, about one-fourth of the whole volume.

Following the practice in past years, the issue begins with two seminal articles by influential Maskilim. The first was written by Mendel Lefin, who died two years earlier. It was a letter that Lefin had sent to a student ten years earlier. In it, Lefin advocated pursuing the religious notion of 'fear of God' that clearly attested to a very moderate ideology of the Haskalah combined with elements of traditional Judaism.³⁶

The second article, by Rapoport, was an answer to a friend who inquired whether Judaism permitted the study of foreign languages, sciences, professions, or trades. Rapoport's answer, based on an elaborate scrutiny of Judaic sources, was that Judaism did not prohibit any such learning.³⁷ Yet, he warned future students not go astray and to adhere to the tenets of their religion. Citing N. H. Wessely's *Divrei Shalom Ve'emet* (Words of Peace and Truth) as guide, Rapoport resorted to Wessely's argumentations with several modifications some 45 years after they had been originally published.

In another typical article, Yitzhak Shmuel Reggio, the Italian Maskil who became an editor in the following year, addressed the question of the *Sambatyon*, the legendary river that was said to separate and protect the ten lost tribes of Israel from the rest of the world.³⁸ He reviewed Jewish and non-Jewish sources and finally arrived at the maskilic conclusion that even though this legend was formed in order to strengthen the spirit of the people, it was totally groundless and superstitious, and thus should be discarded. Being a Maskil, his debunking was based on the foundations of reason, logic, common sense, and scholarly knowledge.

Another Italian Maskil, Shmuel David Luzzatto, manifested a more traditional attitude as he expressed his view on free inquiry in accordance with his concept of Judaism.³⁹ He argued that there was a complete harmony between wisdom and Torah, repeating a similar statement expressed by Isaac Satanow in the early period of the Haskalah in Germany.

Poems published in this issue continued to display identical or similar

³⁶ *Bikurei Ha'itim*, VIII (1827/8), pp. 5–8.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 8–24.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 49–55.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 162–165.

themes as in previous issues, namely, highlighting Spring, the change of the seasons, and hope. One outstanding poem by Shlomo Rapoport enunciated the ideology of the Haskalah from a personal point of view as only a poem could. In it, Rapoport declared openly his outlook and philosophy of life. He proclaimed his total dedication and commitment to his people, and his plan to shed light into its alleged darkness. It will be done by translating the best writings of other nations and cultures into Hebrew, thus enriching and modernizing Jewish culture.⁴⁰

Another poem revealed the attitude of contemporary Maskilim toward the early Haskalah. In this poem, the prolific Maskil David Samośc (1789–1864) of Breslau praised the early Maskilim and *Hame'asef* for their contribution to the Haskalah.⁴¹ He proclaimed again, at this stage of the development of the Haskalah, the indebtedness of *Bikurei Ha'itim* and its Maskilim to *Hame'asef* and its circle of writers.

An insight into the re-evaluation of the corpus of Hebrew letters undertaken by the Maskilim could be found in an introduction that Rapoport wrote to his adaptation into Hebrew of Racine's biblical drama "Esther." In it, Rapoport delineated his unique historiographical concept of Hebrew writing. In his view, the spiritual and political leaders throughout Jewish history have documented their own activities and those of their predecessors in literary writing. Consequently, their writings are vital to understanding Jewish history, and one must not reject any of their writings nor their particular form of literature merely because of contemporary literary taste. Documenting history by past writers has been enriched by their use of literary tools, their linguistic features and their poetic expressions, and thus all forms of historical writings should be accepted. Rapoport gave as an example the *piyutim*, the liturgical poems, that were criticized and rejected by some Maskilim. He was especially appreciative of Wessely's epic *Shirei Tiferet* (Songs of Glory), which he deemed befitting to become part of the sacred *piyutim*.⁴²

Schlesinger's editing seems to be inclusive and diversified. He incorporated in the journal significant writings by major Haskalah writers that shed light on their attitude toward the Enlightenment and Judaism.

Volumes 9–10 (1828–1829): The Editor — Yitzḥak Shmuel Reggio

The next two volumes were edited by the Italian Maskil Yitzḥak Shmuel Reggio (1784–1855), who published his book *Hatorah Vehaphilosiah* in

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 278–281.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 255–256.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 173–190. Moshe Halevi Landau, "Hakdamat Hamadpis" [Printer's Introduction], Helek Shishi Misefer *Shirei Tiferet* [Part Six of *Shirei Tiferet* (Songs of Glory)] by Naphtali Herz Wessely (Prague, 1829), pp. vi–vii.

Schmid's publishing house a year earlier.⁴³ The change of editors was noticed immediately in the beginning of the issue with the introduction of a leading article, more than before resembling an editorial. In it, the new editor reviewed the short history of the journal and the change in the editorial policy following the decision to discontinue the publication of the calendar *Itim Mezumanim* in 1821.⁴⁴

He praised the publisher, Schmid, for his commitment to the publication of Hebrew books and *Bikurei Ha'itim*. He then devoted his article to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Mendelssohn's birth (in 1729). Reggio considered Mendelssohn as the initiator of the Jewish Enlightenment, using metaphors that were applied to the Jewish philosopher by the Maskilim in the early period of the Haskalah. One innovative idea that he offered in his article asserted that Mendelssohn was the initiator and founder of the modern Hebrew press. Alluding to Mendelssohn's editing of *Kohelet Musar* in the 1750s, he presented an innovative view of the Jewish philosopher's contribution to the beginning of Hebrew periodicals.

The editor called on all writers and readers to follow in Mendelssohn's footsteps. It was here and elsewhere in *Bikurei Ha'itim* that we note the continuous impact of Mendelssohn on the Haskalah beyond its first period in Germany, as manifested in its second phase, in Austria.

One of the most impressive works in this issue was the biography of Saadia Gaon by Rapoport.⁴⁵ It presented a new propensity in Rapoport's writing and a shift in orientation of *Bikurei Ha'itim* toward *Hochmat Israel*, the scholarly study of Judaism. This learned biography started a series of similar works on medieval Jewish luminaries by Rapoport in the next issues, which enriched the contents of *Bikurei Ha'itim*. The biographical part of these 'life stories' was dwarfed by copious footnotes that attested to the writer's erudition and great mastery of Jewish sources.

Reggio, too, contributed short biographies on three less known Italian Jewish scholars, but his were a far cry from Rapoport's biographies.⁴⁶ In effect, Reggio's articles tended to be biblio-biographies, concentrating mostly on his subjects' books. Following his own heart, the editor encouraged his Hebrew colleagues to engage in the study of their history, as was done by other nations' writers when they embraced the Enlightenment.

Along the same line of thought, Reggio then offered an intriguing theory, asserting that the combination of *mehkar* — metaphysical and scholarly probe — and Torah, as practiced by Italian Jewish thinkers, was typically leading to their literary success and scholarly achievements. The harmony between these two entities was enunciated earlier in *Bikurei*

⁴³ Yitzḥak Shmuel Reggio, *Hatorah Vehaphilosiphia* [Torah and Philosophy] (Vienna, 1827).

⁴⁴ *Bikurei Ha'itim*, IX (1828/9), pp. 3–4.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 20–37.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 12–14, 14–15.

Ha'itim by Luzzatto, who rejected traditionalists' allegation that the two contradict each other.

Jeiteles, a veteran contributor to the journal, and its forthcoming editor in volumes eleven and twelve, took on the subject of Jewish education that was of major importance to the Haskalah. At that time, Jeiteles was employed as proofreader by Schmid, and most likely assisted in editing this issue, while the editor, Reggio, was living in Gorizia, Italy. The article, initially written in 1810, repeated the essential components of Wessely's ideas in *Divrei Shalom Ve'emet* about introducing reforms in Jewish education, without actually citing Wessely's work. Nevertheless, even without attribution, Wessely's seminal ideas on educational reforms resonated again in the Haskalah 46 years after they had been first published.⁴⁷

Another contribution by Jeiteles dwelled on a lighter side, although not without its importance. He published a new series of anecdotes on recent rabbis and Maskilim.⁴⁸ While his intention was to put both groups on the same footing, he desired also to offer interesting and enjoyable material to the readers. The use of this genre was intended not only to glorify Jewish luminaries, but also to make a statement about the Haskalah. In one of the anecdotes, Jeiteles alluded to the widespread maskilic story of the fish that cried "Shma Israel" and was eventually given a 'Jewish' burial, aiming to ridicule a prevailing superstition.⁴⁹

Poetry in this issue, as in previous issues, reflected the *Zeitgeist*, as viewed by the Maskilim. In one poem, Letteris searched for 'happiness,' a major concept of the European Enlightenment and the Haskalah, and he found it — citing Schiller's saying — in his own heart.⁵⁰ Another Maskil, Mordechai Strelisker, too, was searching for the 'eternal happiness' in an allegorical idyll, and was told that happiness may not be found here on earth but only in the afterlife — professing a totally traditional stand.⁵¹ Thus, two diversified views of a timely topic were presented by Maskilim — indicating the complex, at times contradictory, nature of the Haskalah and the Maskilim.

The tenth volume opened with an editorial by Reggio in which he addressed his fellow Maskilim. As in the editorial in the previous issue, Reggio had high praises for the publisher who continuously and tenaciously published the journal even though it did not cover his expenses.⁵² For the

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 133–149.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 149–157.

⁴⁹ On the story of the fish in Haskalah literature, see Moshe Pelli, *Sugot Vesugyot Besifrut Hahaskalah Ha'ivrit* [Kinds of Genre in Haskalah Literature: Types and Topics] (Israel, 1999), p. 191, n. 60.

⁵⁰ *Bikurei Ha'itim*, IX (1828/9), pp. 188–189.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 60–65.

⁵² *Bikurei Ha'itim*, X (1829/30), pp. 3–4.

first time it was openly stated that Schmid was losing money on *Bikurei Ha'itim*, although he was doubly compensated from his other Hebrew enterprise — publishing *Sifrei Kodesh*, traditional books of the Jewish corpus. The editor urged his readers to help disseminate the journal and increase its subscribers so that Schmid could continue its publication.

For the first time in *Bikurei Ha'itim*'s 10-year history of publication, an editor of the journal declared its mission, which was identical with the goal of the Haskalah. *Bikurei Ha'itim* undertook upon itself to spread the light of the Haskalah, expand knowledge, advocate intellectual pursuit, and restore the Hebrew language to its pristine stature and original beauty for the benefit of Jewish society. This declaration came concurrently with the awareness of the formation of a cohesive group, or the need thereof, around the journal. The editor then proclaimed that the objective of *Bikurei Ha'itim* was to establish a covenant among the contributing writers in order to achieve those common goals. With this came a warning: the Maskilim ought to avoid inner quarrelling, which could divide the group and eventually lead to its disintegration. The editor reminded the readers that this was what happened to the Me'asfim, causing the closure of their journal, *Hame'asef*.

At the center of the volume was Rapoport's scholarly biographies of Rabbi Nathan of Rome, who wrote the talmudic lexicon *He'aruch*, Rabbi Hai Gaon, and Elazar Hakalir.⁵³ As in other writings by Rapoport, one may gain insight into the personality of this Maskil by looking into his introduction to this series of biographies. There, he explained why he undertook to write these biographies. He did it in order to address external and internal criticism alleging that histories of Jewish luminaries were disorganized and that there was no way to establish their authentic depiction.

Rapoport's biographies contributed to the Galician *Hochmat Israel* in his balanced evaluation, scope of learning and insights into the historical processes that prevailed in past Jewish scholarship. He expressed his respect for the study of the Talmud and its commentators in past centuries, while at the same time dismissing casuistry (*pilpul*) of recent generations, which was currently practiced in the traditional study of the Talmud.

The biography proper of Rabbi Nathan occupied 12 pages while the 96 footnotes added 39 more pages. The biography was a ground-breaking endeavor to deal with the topic in a scholarly manner. It was an intellectual biography that dealt essentially with the works of its subject rather than his life-story.

The section of *belles lettres* in this issue had 18 poems written in a variety of styles and themes: there were poems in the form of epigrams, a fable and a dialogue. There was also an epic poem on Astyages, ruler of

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 7–19, 79–83, 95–98.

Media, against whom Cyrus rebelled, and a narrative poem on the paradigmatic talmudic figure of Nahum Ish Gam Zu, emphasizing his supreme trust in God.⁵⁴ Other poems projected a sense of lament and of consolation, which could be read either on the personal or on the national level. They definitely conveyed the existential problems that confronted the Maskilim at the time.

All in all, the two volumes of *Bikurei Ha'itim* under Reggio's editorship continued to make progress in their literary and scholarly qualities. After ten years of publication, *Bikurei Ha'itim* became the mouthpiece of some major writers, in their respective areas of endeavor, who represented a segment of the contemporary Galician school of the Haskalah.

Volumes 11–12 (1830–1831): The Editor — Juda Jeiteles

The last two issues of *Bikurei Ha'itim* were edited by Juda Jeiteles (1773–1838), who had earlier become a director of Schmid's press and a proofreader of his Hebrew production. He, too, was a well-known Maskil who published his Aramaic grammar book in 1813 and was one of the most productive contributors to the journal.⁵⁵

The editorial that opened the issue was written by the former editor, Reggio.⁵⁶ In this programmatic article, Reggio contemplated the best way to promote the Haskalah and its ideology. In his view, the Maskilim should not attempt to shatter the old world still adhered to by the masses. Instead of destroying the shaky building, they should attempt to rebuild and strengthen it. Reggio was far from advocating major reforms in Jewish religion, but indeed wished to see an evolutionary process of changes. In its eleventh year of publication, the identity of the group around *Bikurei Ha'itim* was finally emerging, and it began to reassess its own adaptation of the Haskalah to its needs.

While these were lofty, ideological issues, a practical aspect concerning the future of the journal was raised by Reggio. He reported that the publication of *Bikurei Ha'itim* was in jeopardy because the publisher was losing money on this enterprise. Even though Schmid had maintained his commitment to *Bikurei Ha'itim* for the past ten years, he intended to support the journal for just another year to see whether it could sustain itself. Now, the former editor urged the Maskilim to help disseminate the journal and find more subscribers and more paying readers.

Another article, by the current editor, Jeiteles, which looked like a second editorial, was dedicated to the 100th anniversary of Mendelssohn's

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 135–148, 152–165.

⁵⁵ Juda Jeiteles, *Mevo Halashon Aramit* [Introduction to the Aramaic Language] (Prague, 1813).

⁵⁶ *Bikurei Ha'itim*, XI (1830/1), pp. 3–5.

birth, a topic discussed in the previous issue by the Reggio.⁵⁷ This article, too, was indicative of the umbilical cord that tied the Galician Haskalah to the early Haskalah in Germany. A life-long admirer of the Jewish philosopher, Jeiteles praised Mendelssohn for his contribution to the Jewish people. Holding Mendelssohn in high esteem, the editor proposed that Mendelssohn's date of birth be engraved on the Jewish calendar for eternity as was the date of the biblical Moses. Jewish schools should erect monuments in his memory and students should observe the day in his honor. It was a bold attempt by a Maskil to introduce the Haskalah and its perceived founder into the traditional annual calendar of the Jewish people.

The twelfth volume of *Bikurei Ha'itim* was the last one. Half of its 194 pages was devoted to Rapoport's biographies of Rabbi Hananel and Rabbi Nissim, in his series of biographies of medieval Jewish scholars.⁵⁸ The range of biographies was extended in this issue beyond the Jewish sphere to an intellectual biography of Pythagoras written by Schlesinger.⁵⁹

This was the right occasion to teach the readers some general knowledge as advocated by the Haskalah. Thus, Schlesinger presented Pythagoras' definition of philosophy as the essence of this discipline. The purpose of philosophy, according to Pythagoras, is to free the human spirit from the obstructions that prevent man from achieving perfection. Philosophy aims to prepare man to seek Truth and to inquire in spiritual and divine matters. This definition fits nicely into the scheme of the Haskalah that aspired to free the Jewish person from the shackles of ignorance and superstition.

The range of topics in this issue varied. A very interesting item was a reflective dialogue adapted from an unknown German source, which went back to the 1755 Lisbon earthquake. This event shattered not only the city but also the notion of the benevolence of the Almighty and his providence, and had a seminal influence on European Enlightenment thought. Now, a Maskil revisited this event and its intellectual debate among the European enlighteners, citing the correspondence between Rousseau and Voltaire, and voicing his own view, based on Judaism. This moderate Maskil justified the divine justice, concluding that God's acts were true and just.⁶⁰

One important article in this issue was Rapoport's review of Joseph Perl's anti-Hasidic satire *Megaleh Temirin* (Revealer of Secrets) published in 1819.⁶¹ Addressing the phenomenon of Hasidism eleven years after the

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 23–26.

⁵⁸ *Bikurei Ha'itim*, XII (1831/2), pp. 11–14, 56–58.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 84–101.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 102–117. On the 1755 Lisbon earthquake see Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* (Boston, 1965), p. 147, and Rita Goldberg, "Voltaire, Rousseau, and the Lisbon Earthquake," *Eighteenth Century Life*, XIII (No. 2, May 1989), pp. 1–20.

⁶¹ *Bikurei Ha'itim*, XII (1811/12), pp. 175–181. *Megaleh Temirin* [Revealer of

publication of Perl's book, Rapoport characteristically approached it from a broader perspective, tracing the historical development of the movement. Evaluating the creative works of the people in its state of exile, he cited the decline that occurred in Jewish scholarship upon the emergence of mysticism which eventually led to Hasidism.

Rapoport attributed the advent of Hasidism to the reaction of the masses to the customary study of Talmud on the basis of *pilpul*, which alienated them from the Talmud and its study. Hasidism, in his view, did not harbor either Torah nor wisdom, and it only led the people astray. This was the second open attack on the Hasidic movement that appeared on the pages of *Bikurei Ha'itim*; Erter's satire, cited above, being the first. The reviewer praised Perl for his parody of presenting Hasidism, and for being the first to awaken the people from its slumber of stupidity. He called on the reader to follow in Perl's footsteps against this phenomenon in Judaism. In this review, Repoport showed another aspect of his diversified talents as a sophisticated critic.

At the end of the volume, the editor and the publisher printed a statement about the future of the journal.⁶² It restated the mission of the Haskalah journal, as if this were a prologue to the journal and not its epilogue. Indeed, this was the last issue, they wrote. Despite the warnings in the previous issue about the need to improve the economic base of the journal, the situation had not changed and now the publisher had decided to shut down the journal. However, should readers buy some of the stock of old volumes — the statement concluded — the publisher would consider launching the journal again.

However, this did not happen, and the journal folded, thus closing a chapter in the Hebrew Haskalah in Vienna.

Trends in *Belles Lettres* and General Topics in *Bikurei Ha'itim*

An overview of several literary genres and forms of literature, and central issues and topics discussed in the twelve volumes of *Bikurei Ha'itim*, will present the journal's literary trends.⁶³

The overview attests to the Maskilim's quest for literary forms, linguistic styles and various areas of intellectual pursuit. They endeavored to express themselves in a language that they were trying to revive. They further wished to delineate their experience through the prism of literature

Secrets] was published in Vienna in 1819 under the pseudonym Ovadiah ben Petahiah.

⁶² *Bikurei Ha'itim*, XII (1811/12), pp. 184–194.

⁶³ See Moshe Pelli, *Sugot Vesugyot Besifrut Hahaskalah Ha'ivrit; Idem, Dor Hame'asfim Beshahar Hahaskalah* [The Me'asfim Generation at the Dawn of Haskalah]: The Literary Contribution of the Writers of *Hame'asef*, the First Hebrew Periodical 1783–1811 (Israel, 2001).

and to depict their inner thoughts and feelings about their unique condition as they were trying to resuscitate Hebrew literature and culture.

Poetry was the most popular kind of literature published in the journal, as was also the case in *Hame'asef*. There were some 265 poems published in *Bikurei Ha'itim* as compared to 122 in *Hame'asef*. One can attribute this apparent increase in poetic output to the inclusion in the journal of a whole book by Luzzatto, *Kinor Na'im*, that contained many poems, as well as the inclination of many young and aspiring writers to express themselves in poetry.

Among the sub-categories of poems in the journal there were poems devoted to nature, advocating the ideal of living in the purity and tranquility of nature. Other poems depicted the changing seasons, mostly Spring, a time of renewal, which was chosen as a metaphor for the revival of the people. Several others were religious in tone and faithful in orientation. Some of the poems conveyed hope, while others highlighted sorrow, death, lamentation, and consolation. Dwelling on these themes, a few poets expressed their belief in the afterlife. As was customary in *Hame'asef*, several Maskilim published occasional poems in praise of their rulers and community leaders.

Many of the poems were translations and adaptations from the German and from other European languages. Such were the translations from the canonical corpus of German literature of writings by Gessner, Lessing, Kleist, Herder (recycled from *Hame'asef*) as well as others by Bürger, Klopstock, Herder and Schiller. It was an attempt to show the compatibility of Hebrew and modern languages and literatures.

In **prose**, *Bikurei Ha'itim* published some 17 stories (including the recycled prose from *Hame'asef*), 16 idylls in prose, and 4 biblical stories. Another genre in prose published in *Bikurei Ha'itim* was the Dialogue of the Dead, a genre which was popular in the previous century and was found also in *Hame'asef*. It was a dialogue taking place in the afterlife between the Hebrew language and the linguist and grammarian Wessely.

As part of fiction, *Bikurei Ha'itim* published one satire, by Isaac Erter.

Fables constituted another frequent genre in the journal. Sixty six fables were published (including recycled fables from *Hame'asef*) that were classified as Aesopian, narrative fables, rhymed fables, and poetic fables. Some of the fables were adaptations from the writings of Gessner and Lessing (recycled) and Herder.

Among some of the other genres published in the journal were 40 **riddles**, 78 **epigrams**, and 18 **biographies**.

Reviewing the outstanding topics that interested the Maskilim, one notices the great number of articles in *Bikurei Ha'itim* devoted to the Hebrew language, about 67, indicative of the special attention that the Maskilim understandably displayed toward that subject as part of their concerted effort to revive the Hebrew language. Other major areas of interest included 54 items on biblical topics and textual commentaries.

Education, a major vehicle for change, had 23 items, and Jewish history — some 15. In the sciences, there were 34 articles. Similarly, there were some 16 items of news and several entries on the Jewish community.

Reception of *Bikurei Ha'itim* and Its Aftermath

Bikurei Ha'itim, like *Hame'asef*, had a seminal impact on the periodicals that followed, which cited extensively from its writers and their ideas. The cumulative experience of 12 published volumes of the journal of Haskalah in Austria served as an incentive for writers and editors to initiate another periodical publication in Hebrew for the purpose of continuing to foster creativity in literature and thought as part of their desire to revitalize Hebrew culture.

Following the shut down of *Bikurei Ha'itim*, there were attempts to relaunch the journal under identical or similar names.

In 1844, Mendel Stern published his *Sefer Bikurei Ha'itim* (The Book of the First Fruits of the Times), as a sequel to the original annual. That year, in Amsterdam, Gabriel Polak published another journal, *Sefer Bikurei Hashanah* (The Book of the First Fruits of the Year). Two years later, in 1846, Reggio published *Bikurei Ha'itim Haḥadashim* (The New *Bikurei Ha'itim* [First Fruits of the Times]). These attempts resulted in one-time publications.

Nevertheless, these attempts finally brought about a more permanent and stable publication which charted its own course in Hebrew periodicals, as will be discussed in the next chapter. It was *Kerem Hemed* (Delightful Vineyard) (1833–1843, 1854, 1856), the journal of Hebrew scholarship in Galicia.

It is interesting to note that while *Kerem Hemed* stopped publication in 1843 with the death of its first editor, prior to its renewal in 1854, Mendel Stern and Gabriel Polak were trying to resort to the old form of *Bikurei Ha'itim* in 1844, and two years later Reggio issued his version — *Bikurei Ha'itim Haḥadashim*.

However, the more permanent periodicals were *Kochvei Yitzhak* (Isaac's Stars) (1845–1873), *Heḥalutz* (The Vanguard) (1852–1889), *Otzar Neḥmad* (Lovely Treasure) (1856–1863) and *Bikurim* (First Fruits) (1864–1865).

In assessing the effect of *Bikurei Ha'itim*, the literary historian F. Lachover asserted that subsequently it facilitated the continuation of even better and more important journals, and as a result *Bikurei Ha'itim* could be credited with whatever has been created since in Hebrew literature.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ F. Lachover, “Shalom Hacohen,” *Hatkufah* [The Epoch], VII (1934), p. 457.

CHAPTER EIGHT:

KEREM HEMED: HOCHMAT ISRAEL

AS THE ‘NEW YAVNEH’

Kerem Hemed (Delightful Vineyard) (1833–1856), the third major periodical of the Hebrew Haskalah, represents a new development in Haskalah and its Hebrew press with an orientation toward an in-depth study of Judaism.

This inclination marks the acceptance of the early Haskalah’s views of Judaism with a modified interpretation of its proclamation of free thought, free investigation and the need to redefine Judaism. *Kerem Hemed*, published in Vienna, Prague and Berlin, serving scholars and writers of *Hochmat Israel* (the scholarly study of Judaism), began a new phase of Haskalah Judaism in Galicia and Italy in the fourth to the sixth decades of the nineteenth century.

As noted in the previous chapter, prior to the publication of *Kerem Hemed*, the Hebrew journal *Bikurei Ha’itim* was published in Vienna from 1820 to 1831. In its last year of publication, in 1831, an announcement about the pending closure of this journal was made. At the same time, a young Galician Maskil, Shmuel Leib Goldenberg (1807–1846), negotiated behind the scenes with the printer/publisher of *Bikurei Ha’itim*, Anton Schmid, about publishing a new Hebrew periodical. This periodical, *Kerem Hemed*, was launched in 1833, and continued to be published intermittently in nine volumes till 1856.

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Kerem Hemed was mostly a scholarly journal devoted to the study of Judaism. Importantly, all articles and essays were written in the format of letters, namely, as correspondence between and among the scholars of *Hochmat Israel* in Galicia and Italy, and some in Germany.

The contents of the periodical encompassed a variety of topics in Jewish Studies, such as Bible, biblical criticism and commentary, Mishnah and Talmud and their sages, and studies about them. There were also essays

on the Hebrew language, Jewish history, and newly discovered medieval Hebrew manuscripts, critique and studies of their authors, as well as articles on secular subjects and science.

The recently published monograph and index of *Kerem Hemed*¹ may now serve as a reliable reference tool for viewing and reviewing the major topics and issues that occupied the minds of the editors and the writers of the journal. Readers may now examine the scope and the character of the material published in the nine volumes of *Kerem Hemed*. Likewise, it is now convenient to assess the contribution of participating scholars and authors to *Hochmat Israel* and to the Haskalah literature, and to explore their stand on various scholarly matters, their views on Judaism and Haskalah, and on controversies that engaged the pundits of this group at that time.

From a scholarly point of view, the ‘inventory’ of *Kerem Hemed* lists a diversity of subjects. It includes 53 entries on the Bible and its commentaries, 29 entries on the Mishnah, Talmud and Midrash, 29 items about Haskalah, 18 items on the Hebrew calendar, 12 — of literary criticism, 6 — announcements of new books, 16 — general criticism, 10 biographies, 13 articles on the Hebrew language, 12 on Kabbalah, 13 on Hasidim and Hasidism, 8 on Halachah, and 7 items on *Bikurei Ha'itim*. It encompassed many areas of Judaic studies.

The shift of Haskalah toward *Hochmat Israel* and the scholarly probe of Judaism established *Kerem Hemed* as an important development of Haskalah Judaism.

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Kerem Hemed represents a new phenomenon in the development of Hebrew periodicals in nineteenth-century Haskalah. Its publication on the heels of the discontinuation of *Bikurei Ha'itim*, and the discussions that took place behind the scenes among many interested writers, may point out to some connection between the two. However, a close scrutiny of the journals underscores their difference in character, content and style.

The difference is immediately evident from the diverse editorial statements on their respective title pages. While *Bikurei Ha'itim* declared its educational goal and its statements of mission as catering to the readers’ aesthetic pleasure and fostering practical knowledge — typical of Haskalah — the title page of *Kerem Hemed* advocated another orientation. It stated that the periodical contained letters written by contemporary Hebrew

¹ Moshe Pelli, *Kerem Hemed: 'Hochmat Israel' Hee Yavneh Hahadashah* [*Kerem Hemed: Hochmat Israel* as the ‘New Yavneh’ – A Monograph and an Annotated Index to *Kerem Hemed*, the Hebrew Journal of the Haskalah in Galicia and Italy (1833–1856)] (Israel, 2009). An earlier version of this chapter was presented in Amsterdam on June 18, 2008, as a keynote lecture at the Rosenthaliana Library, University of Amsterdam. A preliminary, shorter version was included in my book on *Kerem Hemed*, listed above, as an English abstract.

scholars in matters related to faith (religion), wisdom and knowledge.² Evidently, the title page declared that the periodical was dedicated to the study of Judaism, known later as *Hochmat Israel*, which was initiated at that time by learned Maskilim in Galicia, Italy and Germany. It followed the founding in Germany in 1819 of the Society for the Scientific Study of the Jews — “Verein Für Wissenschaft der Juden” — and its periodical *Die Wissenschaft des Judenthums*.³

In the introduction to volume one of *Kerem Hemed*, Goldenberg, the editor-publisher, noted the closure of *Bikurei Ha’itim* which would deprive young Maskilim of exposure to the Hebrew language. In order to rectify this problem, he stated that he undertook to publish a Hebrew periodical, but it would have a different character from its predecessor. Goldenberg also reported that he had consulted “the sages of the time,” namely, renowned scholars, about his plans to publish an epistolary periodical of scholarship, and that they encouraged him to go ahead with his plans.⁴

Goldenberg intended the new periodical to include only learned articles written by established scholars and writers whose works manifested meritorious value of a permanent nature. This policy came in counter distinction to *Bikurei Ha’itim* which opened its pages to whoever sent his manuscripts to the editor, and probably printed some material that was not of high literary caliber.

Epistolary Format, Contents and Target Audience

Goldenberg introduced a daring innovation in his periodical. Instead of the conventional form of essays and articles, he chose the format of letters. Those were learned letters that Haskalah scholars exchanged between and among themselves that generally dealt with the study of all phases and phenomena of historical Judaism and its corpus of writings.

In scores of studies, these scholars probed Jewish history critically, examined the dating and the authorship of some biblical books, and revisited the Talmud, its sages and their ways of studying the Halachah (the Jewish legal system). Some Maskilim engaged in the reinterpretation of Judaism, and published newly discovered Hebrew manuscripts, studying their authors and their works.

Some other Maskilim engaged in scholarly arguments against the Kabballah, disputed the authenticity of the *Zohar*, and continued to fight superfluous customs and superstitious beliefs which they argued were not part of authentic Judaism.

The research methodologies that they employed were, in general, critical, accurate and comprehensive. Within the confines of essays, these

² *Bikurei Ha’itim*, I (1820/1); *Kerem Hemed*, I (1833), on the respective title pages.

³ *Zeitschrift für die Wissenschaft des Judenthums* (Berlin, 1822).

⁴ *Kerem Hemed*, IV (1839), pp. [iii]–v.

scholars resorted to historical and linguistic tools known at that time. However, they did not ignore the basic knowledge of Judaism which was derived from their in-depth acquaintance with the traditional texts that were at the basis of their Jewish education and upbringing.

There was a major change in the perceived target audience of this *Haskalah* journal as attested to by the specific topics of these scholars' studies and the nature of their writings. The new journal aimed at a select readership, appealing to the learned elite among the *Maskilim* and to intellectuals. Previous Hebrew periodicals were directed at all levels of *Maskilim* including novices.

In addition to scholarly and learned discussions, the letters, by their very nature, also revealed important information about the writers' personal lives. These letters described events in the writers' family life, their state of health and well-being, and exposed the relationship between them and their correspondents. Some of the letters also revealed social and cultural obstacles which several writers, even the most respectable ones, had faced as part of the struggle between the *Maskilim* and the *Hasidim*, especially in Galicia.

This issue became more acute with some young *Maskilim* who expressed their frustrations resulting from difficulties they had encountered from the traditional society in their desire to be identified as *Maskilim* and to adopt the ideology and perhaps the life style of the *Haskalah*. Veteran *Maskilim* provided them with advice and encouragement as they confronted their adversaries.

The letters also attested to developing friendship among corresponding *Maskilim* — as well as tension and some animosity stemming from their different outlooks on *Haskalah* and disagreements in their perception of Judaism.

Background of the Publication of the New Periodical

A fascinating background of events prior to the publication of the new journal is revealed through the letters published in *Kerem Hemed* as well as in other collections of letters from the same period.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, it was already obvious in 1831 that the future of *Bikurei Ha'itim* was uncertain. The editor of the journal at that time was the learned Italian *Maskil* Yitzḥak Shmuel Reggio (1784–1855), known by the acronym YaSHaR. In the introduction to volume ten, he wrote that the printer, Anton Schmid, has fulfilled his promise to publish the journal for the previous ten years even though “the buyers were very few and the expenses were exceedingly high.”⁵ Under the circumstances, Schmid was now willing to continue publishing the journal only on a trial

⁵ *Bikurei Ha'itim*, X (1829/30), pp. 3–4.

basis in order to see whether it would sustain itself economically by an increase in paid subscribers.⁶ Unfortunately, the financial situation did not improve, and after two more volumes, *Bikurei Ha’itim* ceased publication.

Goldenberg was active behind the scenes already in 1830, and he proposed to Schmid another concept for a new journal, which would consist of scholarly articles in the format of letters.⁷ Thus, in 1831, *Bikurei Ha’itim* was still publishing, but its future was very much in doubt. It appeared then that Goldenberg had secured the consent of the Galician Maskil and scholar Shlomo Yehudah Rapoport (1790–1867), known by the acronym SHIR, to serve as the editor of the planned journal.⁸

Concurrently, Goldenberg approached several writers, among whom was the veteran Galician Maskil Juda Leib Mieses (1798–1831), and notified them of his plans to publish the new Hebrew journal. His intention was to solicit articles for the new periodical.⁹

That same year, 1831, while it was obvious that *Bikurei Ha’itim* would not survive more than another year, and while Goldenberg was contemplating to issue the new journal, *Kerem Hemed*, several scholars, Rapoport among them, also considered publishing a learned journal that would have a new name, and would also consist of articles in letter form. According to the plan, the articles would be reviewed by other scholars prior to publication.

What triggered these plans was a discernible dissatisfaction with *Bikurei Ha’itim*. Rapoport expressed his disappointment with the journal, saying that most readers treated it with contempt, especially because of the “stagnant” material published in it. In order to keep a higher standard, he suggested that the editors should watch out for “the newly born child,” namely, the planned new journal. They have to make sure that only scholars and worthy writers would be invited to contribute to it.¹⁰

Interestingly enough, while all of this was going on, Rapoport himself was contemplating another journal by the name *Jeshurun*.¹¹ He even made plans to publish it in Moshe Landau’s printing press in Prague. As to its contents, Rapoport intended it for scholars and learned Maskilim rather than for youths who were merely interested in Hebrew, and thus he stated that the journal would have very few poems. His plans did not materialize.

⁶ *Ibid.*, XI (1830/1), pp. 4–5.

⁷ Eisig Gräber, ed., *Igrot ShaDaL* [SHaDaL’s Letters], II (Przemyśl, 1882), p. 171.

⁸ *Kerem Hemed*, II (1836), p. 135.

⁹ *Ibid.*, I (1833), p. 124.

¹⁰ Avraham Berliner, “Dovev Siftei Yeshenim” [Moving the Lips of Those that Are Asleep], *Zichron Avraham Eliyahu Harkavi* [In Memory of A. E. H.] (Petersburg, 1909), p. 486.

¹¹ Avraham Berliner, “Pleitat Sofrim, Michtevei SHIR” [Authors’ Remnant, SHIR’s Letters], *Hagoren* [The Barn], III (1902), pp. 195–197.

Shmuel Leib Goldenberg and Scholars' Views of Him

The initiator of the new journal, Shmuel Leib Goldenberg, grew up in a maskilic family. His father, Hirsch, who had acquired a general education and knew several languages, was one of the first Maskilim in Bolichov, Galicia. While the young Goldenberg did not excel as a talented writer or scholar, he was a diligent and an effective organizer, according to literary historian Israel Zinberg.¹² N. M. Gelber, a historian of Galician Jewry, reported that Goldenberg established a close and continuous correspondence with renowned Maskilim in Galicia, Austria, Germany, and Italy. In effect, he was one of the first Maskilim in Galicia to establish contact with Italian Maskilim. Thus, he became an intermediary between the Maskilim in Galicia and in the West.¹³ Of course, this is evident from his diversified correspondence in *Kerem Hemed*.

Goldenberg's character and personality became a subject of discussion among the Maskilim, and some letters from this period depicted scholars' views of him. Already in 1829, prior to the publication of *Kerem Hemed*, Reggio expressed a positive view of Goldenberg. He characterized him as embracing both "the tree of life and the tree of knowledge."¹⁴ Reggio stated that Goldenberg was different from those young people who "despise [free] scholarship," or those who followed some negative phenomena in Galicia, referring to Hasidism or the Karaites. In 1830, Rapoport praised Goldenberg as a "remarkable, talented Maskil," using the customary embellished language.¹⁵

Ostensibly, Goldenberg acquired not only supporters but also enemies who, resenting his maskilic inclination, spread rumors about him, as they did about other Maskilim. But Rapoport reported to Shmuel David Luzzatto (SHaDaL) (1800–1865) that those were false accusations and that he knew Goldenberg to be a staunch observant of the Halachah.¹⁶

The German Jewish historian Isaak Markus Jost (1793–1860) contradicted the accusations against Goldenberg saying that in his view, Goldenberg was without blemish and his activities were correct and proper. Rapoport, in another letter, praised him as good-hearted, practical and sensible, who could help in preparing the new Hebrew journal.¹⁷

¹² Israel Zinberg, *Toldot Sifrut Israel* [History of Hebrew Literature], VI (Merhavyah, 1960), p. 59.

¹³ N. M. Gelber, "Toldot Yehudei Tarnopol" [The History of the Tarnopol Jews] *Encyclopedia Shel Galuyot* [Encyclopedia of the Diaspora], III (Jerusalem, 1955), p. 87.

¹⁴ *Kerem Hemed*, I (1833), pp. 70–71.

¹⁵ *Hacarmel*, IV (7, July 1879), p. 483, Rapoport's letter.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, IV (11, 12, November–December 1879), p. 689, Rapoport's letter.

¹⁷ Berliner, "Pleitat Sofrim, Michtevei SHIR," *Hagoren*, III (1902), p. 196

Who Was the Editor of *Kerem Hemed*?

Literary historians raised the question, who was the actual editor of *Kerem Hemed*. It is known that Goldenberg considered himself merely a publisher, or an editorial manager, but definitely not the editor of the journal. For all intents and purposes, Rapoport served as the actual editor of several of the volumes. While this is generally accepted by literary historians, they disagreed as to when exactly he served as editor. Zinberg claimed that Rapoport became editor in volume three, even though his name was not cited on the title page. Literary historian Joseph Klausner, too, stated that Rapoport was the editor, yet he did not specify in what years.¹⁸

Other scholars expressed different ideas about the editorship of *Kerem Hemed*. Menuḥah Gilbo'a, the author of a lexicon of Haskalah periodicals, asserted that Rapoport was actually the editor of the first seven volumes — together with Goldenberg.¹⁹ Isaac Barzilay wrote that Rapoport undertook to edit the journal in its second volume, and Ezra Spicehandler argued that he edited the journal before and after volume four.²⁰

If one is to judge Rapoport's editorship on the basis of the number of articles he himself contributed to various volumes, it appears that he was very active from volume four to seven. In volumes five and six, Rapoport contributed annotated comments on several articles and replied extensively to severe criticism lodged against him. As a matter of fact, he reported in a letter to Luzzatto of his ceaseless work on volume seven, and that finally he submitted his own articles and those of other scholars to the printer.²¹ That volume contains many of his articles. Volumes eight and nine were edited by Shneur (Senior) Sachs (1815–1892), following the death of Goldenberg, without Rapoport's participation.

What then was Goldenberg's part in editing the journal? Goldenberg himself identified his role as “the person who is responsible to hand over the book to the printers,” namely, serving as publisher, producer, or as editorial manager, but not as editor. He claimed that he was just receiving the letters and arranging them in the journal.²² However, even if he were only arranging the letters and submitting them to the printer, he was criticized by some writers for advancing other contributors' letters before

¹⁸ Joseph Klausner, *Historiah Shel Hasifrut Ha'ivrit Hahadashah* [History of Modern Hebrew Literature], II (Jerusalem, 1960), p. 37.

¹⁹ Menuḥah Gilbo'a, *Lexicon Ha'itonut Ha'ivrit Bame'ot Hashmoneh-Esreh Vehatesha-Esreh* [Lexicon of Hebrew Periodicals in the 18th and 19th Centuries] (Jerusalem, 1992), pp. 70–73.

²⁰ Isaac Barzilay, *Shlomo Yehudah Rapoport and His Contemporaries* (Israel, 1969), p. 42; Ezra Spicehandler, “Joshua Heschel Schorr: Maskil and Eastern European Reformist,” *Hebrew Union College Annual*, XXI (1960), p. 194.

²¹ Eisig Gräber, ed., *Igrot SHIR* [SHIR's Letters], II (Przemysl, 1885), p. 139.

²² *Kerem Hemed*, III (1838), pp. [3–5].

their own. Goldenberg apologized, but explained that he placed letters in the order of their arrival and not on the basis of any special consideration for any particular writer. He argued rather naively that in the realm of research there is no preference in the order of presentation; to him, all articles are equal.

Goldenberg further detailed his part in editing the journal, saying that he did not set himself as judge to evaluate the articles/letters submitted to *Kerem Hemed* by scholars. Thus, he bears no responsibility for the views expressed in those articles, and he published them in their original form as they were received without any change for the readers' own judgment.²³

Even if Goldenberg were not involved in the actual editing of the texts, there is no doubt that arranging the order of letters in a given volume constitutes some editorial judgment. There are several examples which indicate that Goldenberg indeed placed letters by established and more venerable writers before some others. In addition, he ordered articles — or consented to publish articles — that contained some extreme Haskalah views. This, too, indicates an involvement in editorial decisions. Such is the article by the Italian scholar Hillel Della Torre (1805–1871), cited below, in which he criticized the medieval and more recent rabbis for their halachic writings.

The Format of Letters

The use of the letter format as the only form of publishing scholarly articles did not originate uniquely with *Kerem Hemed*. One can trace its use to previous journals. For example, in the 1820s, *Bikurei Ha'itim* did publish, in addition to regular articles, those in the format of letters, many of which were authored by the prolific letter-writer Luzzatto. Even prior to that, at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century, *Hame'asef*, too, published articles in the format of letters.

Similarly, the history of epistolary writings in *belles lettres* abounds with ‘novels in letters’ in the eighteenth century. This type of literature had its Haskalah equivalent in the epistolary story, on which subject I have written extensively.²⁴ In addition, the use of the format of letters was prevalent in historical, political and philosophical writings of the European Enlightenment. It is evident in the writings of Voltaire and Schiller, among others.²⁵

²³ *Ibid.*, IV (1839), pp. [iii]–v.

²⁴ Moshe Pelli, *In Search of Genres: Hebrew Enlightenment and Modernity — An Analytical Study of Literary Genres in 18th- and 19th-Century Hebrew Enlightenment* (Lanham, 2005), ch. 2, pp. 83–118; Pelli, *Sugot Vesugyot Besifrut Hahaskalah Ha'ivrit* [Kinds of Genres in Haskalah Literature: Types and Topics] (Tel Aviv, 1999), p. 29, n. 7.

²⁵ See, for example, Voltaire, *Lettres Philosophiques* [*Lettres Anglaises* (1733)]

In Hebrew Haskalah literature, the use of the letter format for scholarly essay writing appeared already in 1820 in David Caro’s (1782–1839) book *Brit Emet* (Truthful Covenant).²⁶ Also, one should note the phenomena of letters published for educational and practical purposes known as the *Briefsteller*. These collections of letters were intended to teach students how and what to write on certain occasions and special circumstances. Many such manuals were published in Hebrew; for example, Shalom Hacohen’s (1771–1845) *Ktav Yosher* (An Epistle of Righteousness) (1820).²⁷ Also Joseph Perl’s anti-Hasidic satire *Megaleh Temirin* (Revealer of Secrets) (1819) was written in letter form.²⁸

Six years prior to the publication of *Kerem Hemed*, in 1827, the young aspiring writer and editor, Meir Halevi Letteris (1800–1871), had already published a collection of authors’ letters titled *Michtavim* (Letters).²⁹ This anthology included 16 essays by major authors of that time. Among them were several who contributed later to *Kerem Hemed*, such as Nahman Krochmal (RaNaK) (1785–1840), Isaac Erter (1791–1851) and Juda Leib Mieses.

This format of letters became the conventional style of scholarly presentations in these years. Some writers even published their own letters in separate books, such as Reggio’s *Igrot YaSHaR* (YaSHaR’s Letters) (1834). Interestingly enough, the “Wissenschaft des Judenthums” in Germany — the counterpart of the Galician study of Judaism in Hebrew — did not resort to this letter format. Its periodical, published in Berlin in 1822, had articles in the conventional format.³⁰

In spite of previous usages of the letter format, Goldenberg should get proper credit for introducing this format for scholarly writings and learned essays into Hebrew Haskalah periodicals and cultivating it. This format gained popularity in other periodicals that were published after *Kerem Hemed*, such as *Otzar Nehmad* (Lovely Treasure) (1856–1863), which contained articles in letters.

Why the Use of Letters?

Scholars were intrigued by the use of the letter format in *Kerem Hemed* for presenting learned articles and research essays, and tried to explain this phenomenon. Max Weisberg explained the use of the letter format as a

²⁶ (Paris, 1964).

²⁷ [David Caro], Amitai ben Avida Ahitzedek, *Brit Emet* [Truthful Covenant] (Constantinople, [Dessau], 1820).

²⁸ Shalom Hacohen, *Ktav Yosher* [An Epistle of Righteousness] (Vienna, 1820).

²⁹ *Megaleh Temirin* [Revealer of Secrets] (Vienna, 1819), under the pseudonym Ovadia ben Petahiah.

³⁰ Meir Halevi Letteris, *Michtavim* [Letters] ([Lemberg], 1827).

³⁰ *Zeitschrift für die Wissenschaft des Judenthums* (Berlin, 1822).

means to limit the intervention of censorship, which was presumably less strict about published letters.³¹ Klausner disagreed and argued that the letter format was selected because it was “a nice literary form.”³²

It seems, however, that the censorship notion is the most plausible explanation for the choice of the format of letters. As reported by some of the Maskilim, censorship regulations were very strict in Austria. Rapoport, for one, complained in some of his letters about the harsh treatment by the censor. Goldenberg, too, reported on hardships and delays in publishing volume four of *Kerem Hemed* from which the censor deleted a few “precious letters” because they were “polemic writings.” The strict censorship regulations enacted by Metternich made it difficult to publish books and general periodicals, and even harsher restrictions were imposed on Hebrew publications. These restrictions were abolished only in 1848.

Zinberg had another theory for the use of letters for scholarly studies. He quoted Rapoport’s preference for letter-writing directed at a distinguished scholar whom he knew rather than writing books that would be read by people whom he did not know. Zinberg also cited the practice used by many Haskalah writers to copy their letters and send them to other than the intended correspondent for more exposure.³³

Examining the phenomenon of the epistolary format, the question is raised whether the published letters/articles had been written initially as articles and then adapted to the format of letters. Another possibility is that authors were requested to write their articles as letters in the first place and send them, in letter form, to the publisher. Evidently, the publisher endeavored to apply the format of letters uniformly to all material published in *Kerem Hemed* even though there were articles that initially had not been written in this format. Erter, for example, remarked that Goldenberg had published his satire “Hasidut Vehochmah” (Hasidism and Wisdom)³⁴ in the format of a letter to fit the general style of the journal, which was not its initial form. Erter, then, commented that if he had been asked to do so, he would have written his satire originally as a letter, and that from now on he would abide by this particular style.³⁵

It is also safe to assume that once this style had been used in *Kerem Hemed*, writers followed it and sent in their articles in the form of letters.

Several of the writers who contributed to *Kerem Hemed* offered their explanation for the use of letters. Letteris, who, as mentioned before, preceded Goldenberg in publishing a collection of letters, explained that he preferred the format of letters because they present the writers’ true

³¹ Max Weissberg, *Die neuhebräische Aufklärungs-Literatur in Galizien* (Leipzig und Wien, 1898), p. 63.

³² Klausner, *Historiah Shel Hasifrut Ha’ivrit Hahadashah*, II, p. 38.

³³ Zinberg, *Toldot Sifrut Israel*, VI, p. 59.

³⁴ *Kerem Hemed*, II (1836), pp. 138–147.

³⁵ *Kerem Hemed*, III (1838), p. 106.

thoughts, ideas and expose their personalities.³⁶

Another writer, Luzzatto, asserted that he had chosen the letter format for a scholarly article because it is a segment of a full-length study and the letter is the best form for such fragmentary material.

Luzzatto, who is known for his letter writing, offered a few suggestions to Goldenberg about editing the journal in its letter format. He recommended first, that the journal should print many letters written by a diversified group of writers; second, that the editor should provide information about the writers, their location, age and occupation; and third, that the editor should be strict about the proper use of the Hebrew language and its clarity in the published letters so that youthful readers may learn from them by emulating their style. Evidently, Luzzatto desired that the journal combine an educational orientation with the scholarly one while paying close attention to the proper use of the Hebrew language.³⁷

Interesting observations about the letter as a literary tool were offered in 1885 by the novelist Reuven Asher Braudes. He explained the difference between book writing and letter writing saying that a book is intended to be read by the general public, and thus its author would, at times, be inclined to hide his personal views so that he would not irritate the readers. The letter, however, is written on a personal level, not for public consumption, and in it the writer would not hesitate to present his true opinions. Braudes emphasized the value of such letters for gaining insights into the writer's mind and his personality.³⁸

Some 40 years later, Ben Zion Dinaburg (Dinur) was working on Rapoport's archive, and he expressed similar views about Rapoport's letters. His ideas may be applicable to letter writing in general as well as to those published in *Kerem Hemed*. Dinaburg noted that letters bring the reader closer to the literary and scholarly milieu of their writers' generation. These letters describe their learned writers in their scholarly 'workshops,' so to speak, revealing also their daily problems and mundane concerns. These scholars depicted the difficulties they had encountered in their efforts to acquire scholarly books or to copy manuscripts of esoteric texts needed for their research. They were engaged in down-to-earth matters related to publishing and the distribution of their books, and had to deal with printers and publishers, as well as with censorship. Their letters reveal disputes that they had had with their colleagues on scholarly issues or on critical reviews of their work. Some young authors appealed in their letters for help and

³⁶ Meir Halevi Letteris, Introduction, *Michtevei Bnei Kedem* [Letters of Men of Antiquity] (Vienna, 1866), unpaginated.

³⁷ Gräber, ed., *Igrot SHaDaL*, II, p. 171.

³⁸ Reuven Asher Braudes, "Michtevei Bikoret" [Critical Letters], supplement, *Igrot SHIR* [SHIR's Letters], I (Przemysl, 1885), pp. 10–11; reprinted from *Archives Israélites*, Nr. 25, p. 195 (18 Juin 1885).

guidance from the more established Maskilim.³⁹

This exchange of letters, as published in *Kerem Hemed*, created bonds of friendship between and among scholars, such as Rapoport and Luzzatto. On the other hand, some letters also reveal rivalries that existed between scholars, or between writers and critics. Several letters were in effect reviews of books or articles sent to the author by the reviewer, or by Goldenberg who served as a conduit between them. Once published, this personal correspondence became available for everybody to read, and thus these friendships as well as clashes became public knowledge. They also turned out to be authentic sources for the history of Haskalah literature and its writers.

The publisher used to link letters on similar topics and print them consecutively. At times, he would attach responses to criticism right then and there, thus creating a debate with some tension and interest. This aspect ascribed to *Kerem Hemed* a notion of a lively periodical that printed timely material, although it had a longer life span than that of newspaper articles.

On the Characteristic of the Letter

There are some other attributes of published letters as a distinct genre.

The writing style of the letter is personal and private, and, as suggested previously, the personality of the writer is exposed in letters more than in articles. These letters let strangers peek into the writers' inner sanctuary and have direct access to their creative and scholarly laboratory.

Scholarly letters tend to be less formal than articles, and they may focus on more than one topic. In spite of their informality, letters do have structure, and their writers use letter-writing conventions. Letters have an introduction, salutation in greeting the correspondent, and closing words. Letters also cite the date, locale and some circumstances of the writing. Such information is generally not included in regular articles, and of course, it provides important facts to the reader.

Hebrew letters of this period, in particular, also included opening greetings in which the writers expressed high praise and compliments to their correspondents in an embellished language. Those lofty and glorifying terms must be taken with a grain of salt. The flowery language represented salutation convention which called for ornate language that may not necessarily be taken literally.

The scholarly matter presented in letters tended to come 'hot' from the scholarly oven, and at times may not be fully developed. This is exemplified in a biblical commentary offered by Luzzatto, which he said had just been originated at that time in a discussion with his students.⁴⁰ In like manner, Reggio apologized in a letter to his correspondent saying that

³⁹ Ben Zion Dinaburg, *Kiryat Sefer* [City of Book], II (1925–6), p. 69.

⁴⁰ *Kerem Hemed*, I (1833), p. 74.

he wrote from memory because he did not have his books with him.⁴¹

The ‘Republic of Letters’

Literary criticism of the Enlightenment literature uses the term ‘Republic of Letters’ to refer to the establishment of a community of writers and pundits as a rising influential power in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This emerging circle of intellectuals is deemed to have left a substantial mark on society ideologically as well as politically and socially in its published books and articles.

Related to this phenomenon is the development of the media for the reading public in the form of books, newspapers, periodicals and pamphlets, the circulation of which expanded significantly in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Similarly, we may observe the emergence of the Hebrew Maskilim as an up and coming force in Jewish society, first in Germany, and then in Austria and Galicia, which competed with the existing structure of the Kehilah and the religious establishment.

With the rise of the intellectual community in the European Enlightenment we note the emergence of the phenomenon of letter writing by outstanding authors and scholars and its publication for public consumption. These published letters served as means of communication between writers and readers, creating a wider and borderless intellectual community for the exchange of views and ideas.⁴² This was also the case in the Hebrew Haskalah.

The dispersion of the Hebrew Maskilim in their scattered communities in Europe dictated the need for such correspondence. Some of the Maskilim lived far from the centers of Haskalah, and even between the centers of Haskalah in Galicia, Russia and Lithuania there were vast distances.

As these Maskilim exchanged letters on timely matters related to current events and to issues pertaining to the Haskalah, they proceeded to write to their correspondents on scholarly topics of mutual interest. They exchanged letters citing their innovative commentaries on the Bible and the Talmud, and their learned essays on the Hebrew language and on a variety of topics related to the scholarly study of Judaism.

As a Hebrew periodical, *Kerem Hemed* served the intellectual community of the Haskalah from the 1830s to the 1850s. The journal united the Galician Maskilim with their counterparts in Italy and Germany, in part, and it enhanced the growth and the scope of the study of Judaism, known as

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

⁴² Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (Ithaca and London, 1994), pp. 137–139; Elizabeth Heckendorf Cook, *Epistolary Bodies* (Stanford, 1996), pp. 40–41, 190, n. 13.

Hochmat Israel. This community of scholars was borderless, somewhat international in scope, serving Maskilim in several countries. As stated by the publisher of *Kerem Hemed*: The periodical "...intends to publish beneficial material in the world of scholarship, and sensible remarks in relation to the condition of the people of Jeshurun aiming to benefit the nation so that it would mend its ways. [These matters will] add to the glory of our precious language, and will help disseminate knowledge from country to country."⁴³

Kerem Hemed declared itself to be a scholarly journal. Nevertheless, within its learned studies one may note definite Haskalah tendencies, manifesting the writers' attempts to promote the Haskalah and its ideology. Some of the so-called 'esoteric' studies reflect plain messages against superstitions and Kabbalah. Other learned studies offer rationalistic and modern perceptions of Judaism, as befitting the Haskalah orientation, while some letters criticize severely the phenomena of Hasidism in Galicia that were considered by the Maskilim to harbor false religious practices and superstitious beliefs.

***Kerem Hemed* is the 'New Yavneh'**

Upon assessing the scholarly achievements of *Kerem Hemed* in its nine volumes, one may conclude that the editors-publishers Shmuel Leib Goldenberg and later Shneur Sachs and those helping them succeeded in establishing a scholarly periodical for the learned Maskilim in Galicia, Italy and in Germany. These scholars continued, in a more profound way, the scholarly activities of the early Maskilim in Germany and Galicia, whose works were featured in the first two Hebrew periodicals, *Hame'asef* (1783–1811) and *Bikurei Ha'itim* (1820–1831), and in their other publications, as reported in the previous two chapters.

The pages of *Kerem Hemed* attest to the commitment of these learned Maskilim to follow in the footsteps of early Haskalah scholarship, yet with some modification of orientation and contents, and to continue to write in Hebrew.

Instead of mostly *belles lettres* and articles intended for the general public of Maskilim, as was the case with the first two Hebrew journals, the scholars of *Hochmat Israel* writing in Hebrew devoted their creative energies to an in-depth study of Judaism. They undertook a revised look into biblical and talmudic texts in the spirit of free and independent research. Even though they endeavored to employ research methodologies and scholarly resources prevalent at that time, they did not ignore the traditional reading of these sacred texts. Their efforts were geared to a select, intellectual and enlightened audience.

⁴³ *Kerem Hemed*, III (1838), pp. [3–5].

Upon reviewing the accomplishment of *Hochmat Israel* in Jewish thought, scholarship and research, as manifested in *Kerem Hemed*, its aims and goals in this second period of Haskalah in Galicia becomes clear. It is evident that these scholars felt an obligation to take a fresh look at the corpus of Hebrew letters and Jewish textual heritage, and probe it with newly acquired research tools. Among their other goals, they aimed to present the authoritative Jewish texts authentically without printers' errors and copiers' omissions.

They further undertook to probe the classical texts and to identify unknown source material, aiming to eradicate erroneous customs and fallacious ideas that had taken hold among Jews. These scholars attributed them to the influence of foreign cultures and religions. They alleged that those customs and practices were falsely attributed to Jewish tradition and had been erroneously introduced into some texts.

The scholars contributing to *Hochmat Israel* planned to search in libraries throughout Europe and to look for unknown manuscript materials of Judaic sources. The newly discovered texts and others that they studied were supposed to shed new light on the spiritual, religious and cultural development of Judaism. The Maskilim wanted to probe aspects of Judaism which were in contrast to the accepted traditional notions that the great minds in historical Judaism dwelled mostly on the study of Halachah. Thus, these Maskilim aspired to point out positive attributes of classical Judaism, underscoring its inherent qualities of enlightenment and openness.

The scholars of *Hochmat Israel* wished to revive unknown or forgotten literary treasures of Jewish heritage and to place them on the maskilic ‘Jewish book shelf.’ They wanted to shed light on unknown aspects in Judaism, and to highlight those aspects that had not gained proper recognition.

One of their stated goals was to point out that Jewish sages of yore dealt with all aspects of science and human knowledge of their times, and did not limit their interest only to purely Judaic subjects. Even as those sages of antiquity explored Judaism itself, close study of their writings by modern scholars revealed new insights as to how they had conceptualized Judaism.

Following subtle messages which they traced in the writings of some classical commentators, such as Abraham Ibn Ezra, some scholars arrived at a different and ‘modern’ reading of some biblical texts. Yet, they still rejected high criticism of the Bible as presented by non-Jewish scholars if their views contradicted the spirit of Judaism. In their imaginative scrutiny of texts for innovative understanding, some scholars found in classical commentaries to the Bible and in the Talmud allusions to hidden, perhaps non-conventional, notions beyond the literal and simplistic concepts which

were initially intended for the masses.⁴⁴

Exploring past treasures of Jewish heritage resulted in the publication of the Maskilim's discoveries. Thus, they printed in *Kerem Hemed* segments of Ibn Ezra's books and commentaries, Maimonides' letter to the Sultan, a letter attributed to his son, Abraham, poems by Moshe Ibn Ezra, and many others, enriching the corpus of Jewish letters.⁴⁵

Their special interest in classical works in Hebrew prompted even a scholar who wrote mostly in German, Abraham Geiger (1810–1874), to argue in a Hebrew article in *Kerem Hemed*, for the need of basic study of the Hebrew language. He stated that it was the obligation of modern scholars to study the foundations of the Hebrew language by going to the roots of the language, and explore the classical writings, when Hebrew was the people's language.

The range of the studies published in the journal included historical, cultural and religious aspects of the sacred texts. It encompassed the Hebrew Bible and its traditional commentators, the Mishnah and Talmud, *piyut*, the liturgy, as well as medieval writings and beyond.

The studies published in the journal covered also secular disciplines as geography, archaeology, geometry, astronomy, and the Hebrew language. They also included discussions in the sacred domain, such as the notion of prophecy, religious customs, religious reforms, and the Jewish calendar. There were also studies on the lives of distinguished personalities. The published research materials, such as biographies of prominent authors, were deemed by the editor as vital documents that might be used by any future scholar studying the given subject.⁴⁶ The journal also published some timely information on European Jewry in Italy, Galicia and Russia, among others.⁴⁷

One of the most intriguing expressions found in *Kerem Hemed* that reveals the scholars' self image of their own creative contribution to the study of Judaism referred to *Hochmat Israel* as the 'new Yavneh.'⁴⁸ This important term implied the notion that the Maskilim were acting to create a new spiritual center — a new Yavneh — to ensure the survival of the Jewish people. This concept contradicts the notion that *Hochmat Israel* — at least in Hebrew — was essentially digging into the past in order to bury it all over again, and that its purpose was to erect a tombstone to Judaism.

Yet, upon contemplating the future of *Hochmat Israel* itself, the editor Sachs stated painfully that this generation of Hebrew scholars did not

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, IX (1856), pp. 14–19.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, III (1838), pp. [9]–31.

⁴⁶ See for example biography of Moshe Hayim Luzzatto, *Kerem Hemed*, II (1836), pp. 54–67.

⁴⁷ See in the index, Pelli, *Kerem Hemed: 'Hochmat Israel' Hee Yavneh Haḥadashah*, pp. 295–297.

⁴⁸ *Kerem Hemed*, IX (1856), p. 75.

produce a continued cadre coming from the ranks of the scholars themselves. Scholars' sons did not follow in the footsteps of their learned fathers, and those who potentially could, such as 'Ohev Ger,' Luzzatto's son, and Michal, Adam Hacohen Lebensohn's son, died in the prime of their lives before they could realize their creative potentials to the fullest.⁴⁹

Even though these scholars' contribution to *Kerem Hemed* dwelled on different areas, disciplines, and phases of Jewish scholarship, the very exchange of letters among them created a somewhat crystallized group, different viewpoints and perception of Judaism notwithstanding.

An overview of the major subjects and disciplines addressed by these writers with more details and examples should reflect the general stand and orientation of *Hochmat Israel*, manifested in *Kerem Hemed*, as follows:

Biblical Scholarship: The Authorship and Dating of Biblical Books

Studies about the Hebrew Bible in *Kerem Hemed* centered mostly on scholars' attempts to date some biblical books and to establish their authorship. Also, several Psalms were in dispute and scholars debated their dating.

Luzzatto, for one, dismissed the notion that some Psalms belong to the late Hasmonean period. Thus, he adhered to the traditional concept of dating them to early Davidic origins, or other earlier authors.⁵⁰ Similar discussions were conducted about the dating of the book of Job, and Luzzatto argued for its early composition. He contended that attributing a late date to Job would also imply the lateness of the writing of the Torah itself, a notion that he staunchly rejected. Likewise, the question of the authorship of the latter part of Isaiah, ascribed to deutero-Isaiah, was also debated; Luzzatto rejected the notion of a second Isaiah while Krochmal thought it was an inevitable conclusion.⁵¹

Perception of the Talmud and Its Sages

The attitude of these scholars toward the Talmud and its sages was not a unified one, but indeed did not fit the generally accepted notion that the Maskilim "hated the Talmud." There is no doubt that the scholars of *Hochmat Israel* in Galicia and Italy expressed their high esteem for the sages of the Mishnah and the Talmud. These Hebrew scholars endeavored to underscore the sages' positive attributes and their broad knowledge, wisdom, and sophistication. Yet, they disapproved of the *pilpul* — the casuistry manner of studying the Talmud that was practiced in their time.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, VIII (1854), p. 193.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, VIII (1854), pp. 5–9.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, VII (1843), pp. 214–242.

Luzzatto, for example, highlighted the moral traits of some of the Talmud sages, such as Hillel. This sage was said to have been very humble in his dispute with Shamai, and thus, possessing exemplary qualities, he merited that many disputed Halachot — religious ordinances — were finally based on his views.⁵² Other scholars showed the wisdom and knowledge of talmudic sages in secular disciplines and science.

Another kind of discussion attempted to cope with strange tractates found in the Talmud that could not be understood literally or explained rationally. In so doing, these scholars went in the footsteps of their predecessors in the German Haskalah who undertook to explain esoteric Midrashim. For example, one scholar tried to explain the strange story about Rabbi Ahai who died and was later reported to have been seen alive. This scholar reported of cases that buried people were found with their whole bodies remaining intact.⁵³ Addressing this story, the Italian scholar Reggio suggested that the talmudic story has to be understood as metaphoric, intended to exemplify a certain idea, but indeed it should not be read literally.

In the same vein, Krochmal explained an esoteric Midrash stating that God holds “three keys that have not been given to a messenger” as having a profound ethical idea.⁵⁴ He asserted that one may find hidden divine wisdom in the sages’ studies that extend beyond the literal meaning of a given text. Another scholar, Abraham Geiger, argued that many religious ordinances were enacted by the talmudic sages to counteract marginal sects that deviated from mainstream Judaism at that time.⁵⁵ Therefore, these ordinances should be understood in the context of their time. By this interpretation, the reform-oriented Geiger hinted at the temporality and the transitory nature of some religious rules.

Scholarly Studies that Have Relevance to Their Times

Some of the scholarly topics discussed in *Kerem Hemed* indicated a direct relevance to the modern times. Even in some purely research studies one may find the timely and relevant message, where the writer deviated from the historical context and commented on contemporary trends in a critical voice. Evidently, even scholars who immersed themselves in the study of esoteric subjects still functioned within their time and place and were not detached from social and cultural problems that surrounded them. The format of letters facilitated such timely comments.

Rapoport, for example, wrote a scholarly article about the method of studying in Babylonian yeshivot that was based on *pilpul*, and cited

⁵² *Ibid.*, III (1838), pp. 219–223.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, VI (1841), pp. 80–93.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, IX (1856), pp. 14–19.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, V (1841), pp. 99–104

talmudic sages who criticized it. Rapoport added a timely message to his scholarly article which aimed to criticize this kind of study in contemporary yeshivot. Similarly, he dealt with the habit of some Babylonian sages to leave their homes and families and go to Eretz Israel. Subsequently, he related his scholarly discussion to the contemporary scene by criticizing the habit of some Hasidim to do the same: abandon their families and go to stay with the Hasidic rabbi for some time.⁵⁶

A similar criticism was lodged by the Italian scholar Hillel Della Torre against the latter rabbinic authorities for their casuistic way of study, the corrupt language of their writings, and for adding many trivial customs and secondary ordinances to Judaism. His intention was not only historical but also timely, that is, to criticize similar practices in the contemporary scene.⁵⁷

A recurring topic on the pages of *Kerem Hemed* dealt with the talmudic question, discussed in tractate Eduyot, whether a court may rescind the halachic decisions of an earlier court.⁵⁸ Behind this theoretical discussion lurked the practical debate on the latter-day legal ground for reforming the Halachah. Those scholars who were inclined toward religious reform would allow halachic changes whereas more traditional scholars, especially those in Galicia and Italy, argued that the question does not apply to modern times and it should be understood only in its original talmudic context.

Some scholars also discussed the question of the editing and the writing of the Mishnah. Did Rabbi Judah, the editor of the Mishnah, actually edited it in writing thus disobeying the prohibition to leave the oral law in its oral state in order not to confuse it with the written law? Or did he edit it orally, and only after several generations did the sages actually commit the Mishnah to writing?⁵⁹ The debate highlighted the difference between the traditionalist scholars and the more progressive ones.

Identify Exemplary Figures of Judaism

As part of their scrutiny of the Talmud, some scholars studied closely outstanding sages with the intention to identify enlightened aspects in their personalities and their work. Such was a study of Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakai who is portrayed as an exemplary figure in an article by Yehiel Michal Sachs (1808–1864). The author attributed the historical memory of the destruction of the Temple to this sage whose efforts to build the center at Yavneh helped preserve the historical past.⁶⁰ In addition, Ben Zakai did not only study the Halachah but aspired to explore it in depth, to search the rationale behind the precepts, and tried to understand hidden messages

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, III (1838), pp. 83–87.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, II (1836), pp. 85–94.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, III (1838), pp. 61–76; *ibid.*, IV (1839), pp. 131–147, *et passim*.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, III (1838), pp. 61–76.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, VII (1843), pp. 269–278.

imbedded in some classical texts. He is portrayed as a ‘Maskil’ in his time.

Other scholars, such as Rapoport, were working on the identity of Elazar Hakalir, his time and place, and on the identity of Antonine who was reported to have been a friend of Rabbi Judah, editor of the Mishnah. Controversies followed Rapoport’s theories and they found their place in the journal. *Kerem Hemed* also published scholarly biographies of Moshe Hayim Luzzatto and Azarya de Rossi, both of whom apparently represented some preliminary aspects of the Enlightenment; they were thought to have contributed in their times to the scholarly study of Judaism, foreshadowing the spirit of *Hochmat Israel* and the Haskalah.⁶¹

Continued Fight against Superstitions and Corrupt Customs

The scholars of *Hochmat Israel* continued to fight faulty beliefs and corrupt customs very much like the early Maskilim. They wanted to prove that those beliefs and customs are in effect erroneous and are not part of Judaism, as they perceived it. They tried to show that these beliefs and customs are superfluous to Judaism and were introduced among Jews under foreign influence from the surrounding cultures and religions.

Some of the veteran Maskilim, such as Mieses, continued their struggle against superstitions and false customs, which they had begun earlier in their writings. Mieses studied the belief in angels and argued that it represents the accepted notion in the mentality of the people at the time, but it does not reflect authentic Jewish faith.⁶² Another writer, Gabriel Polak (1803–1869), cited from an early manuscript that praying to various angels, such as Metatron, is in effect idolatry.

The veteran Maskil Joseph Perl (1773–1839) undertook to examine such prevailing customs as giving charity in boxes named after Rabbi Meir “the miracle-master.” He argued that this was a rather new practice that came about only recently, that it has no basis in tradition, and thus it should be abolished. Similar customs, he asserted, ought to be thoroughly examined as well.⁶³

Rejection of Kabbalah and the *Zohar*

As part of exposing the falsehood in superstitions, some of the scholars also rejected Kabbalah and argued that the *Zohar* is a forgery written by Moshe de Leon, and definitely is not an ancient book. Their maskilic rationalism and the quest for scientific truth led the adherents of *Hochmat Israel* to nullify the mystical Kabbalah. Yet, when it had to do with publishing kabbalistic manuscripts, a scholar such as Adolf (Aaron) Jellinek (1820–

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, II (1836), pp. 54–67; *ibid.*, V (1841), pp. 131–158.

⁶² *Ibid.*, I (1833), pp. 125–128.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, II (1836), pp. 18–24, *et passim*.

1893) did not have any problem publishing such manuscripts as part of the reconstruction of the textual heritage of the Jewish people.

Thus did *Hochmat Israel* serve the purpose of Haskalah in promoting an ideology of progress and freedom from superstitions and prejudice. Undoubtedly, the participation of Mieses and Perl in *Kerem Hemed* signifies a growing maskilic militancy of this scholarly journal.

Struggle against Hasidism and Hasidim

One of the manifestations of a strictly Haskalah act that exceeded the scholarly and scientific orientation of the journal was the continuous campaign against Hasidism and Hasidim. In this struggle, the Italian Maskilim who had not encountered the Hasidim the way the Galician Maskilim did, joined forces with their comrades in arms. Luzzatto and Reggio expressed highly derogatory expressions against the Hasidim, showing their maskilic sense of identity with their Galician counterparts.⁶⁴

Another type of opposition to the Hasidim was channelled through *belles lettres* in Erter's anti-Hasidic satires or Rapoport's review of Perl's satire *Bohen Tzadik* (Testing the Righteous) in *Kerem Hemed*, in which he cited Perl's earlier anti-Hasidic satire *Megaleh Temirin*.⁶⁵

Pungent Disputes from Within and Without

Kerem Hemed devoted several articles to past public disputes and controversies that echoed these scholars' viewpoints, presenting their identity as Maskilim. Some of the controversies happened in the distant past, such as the Maimonides' dispute in his time and afterward. In this case, the maskilic orientation seems to seek historical and ideological support in that struggle for their own cause. Other disputes were closer to their times, such as the amulets dispute between rabbis Jacob Emden and Jonathan Eybeschütz.⁶⁶ The Haskalah stand against amulets and the Sabbatian movement is clearly discernable in these articles. Another dispute is cited in a biography of Moshe Hayim Luzzatto who was accused of considering himself to be a messiah. The biographer defended Luzzatto, rejecting those accusations.

Rabbi Aaron Chorin's (1766–1844) disputes with the traditionalist rabbis in several instances — such as the 1818–1819 Reform Temple controversy⁶⁷ — were also cited as well as Perl's criticism of the custom of depositing charity into boxes named after Rabbi Meir.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, II (1836), pp. 149–153.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, I (1833), pp. 135–137; *ibid.*, I (1839), pp. 137–139; *ibid.*, IV (1839), pp. 45–57.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, II (1836), pp. 168–171.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, II (1836), pp. 96–108.

Some disputes occurred among the scholars themselves as a result of their diversified views and conflicting interpretation of Judaism. Krochmal and Shmuel David Luzzatto disagreed whether Maimonides' concept of the resurrection of the dead is indeed a tenet of authentic Judaism. Luzzatto criticized Maimonides for rejecting the idea of corporeal resurrection whereas Krochmal suggested that one should not treat this subject in a simple way; yet he believed in it as a miraculous act promised by the Almighty.

This dispute was also extended to the thirteen tenets of Judaism as promulgated by Maimonides. Luzzatto thought that Judaism had not had any such tenets prior to Maimonides, whom he criticized, and thus he believed that they should be rejected. Krochmal, on the other hand, was of the opinion that Judaism did have principles prior to medieval times, and therefore the Maimonidian principles may be accepted.⁶⁸

These disputes between the journal's contributors, such as Rapoport and Luzzatto or Krochmal and Luzzatto, created tension within the group. Goldenberg complained about these rifts in his introductions to some volumes, saying that their opponents were very pleased to have the Maskilim themselves weaken their own position by their infighting.

Several of Rapoport's articles contained controversial theories that generated severe criticism in books and articles. To address his critics, he wrote many polemical articles in *Kerem Hemed* and tried to defend his positions. In addition, Rapoport and others had to conduct an on-going struggle against their more traditional adversaries who shunned free investigation and scholarship as advocated by the Haskalah. Faced with controversies within the group and outside of it, typically, Rapoport undertook a scholarly study of the history of controversies in Jewish civilization which he published in *Kerem Hemed*.

Haskalah Topics Discussed in *Kerem Hemed*

Even though *Hochmat Israel* scholars were inclined to write mostly studies and essays on purely scholarly matters, the very nature of the format, namely letters, facilitated also informal information of a personal nature. One of the interesting phenomena was the cultivation of young Maskilim, providing them with moral support vis-à-vis frequent persecutions by the Hasidim. Veteran Maskilim, such as Krochmal, encouraged novices to continue pursuing Haskalah and to disregard any social pressure from their opponents, which at times even included threats of ex-communication. Well-known Maskilim like Shalom Hacohen and Yaakov Shmuel Byk (1772–1831) prompted their young followers to continue their creative writing in Hebrew while Krochmal advised a young Maskil not to hurry in

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, III (1838), pp. 61–76; *ibid.*, IV (1839), pp. 260–286.

publishing his writings.⁶⁹

Conscious of its Haskalah heritage, *Kerem Hemed* undertook to publish important documents in the history of the Haskalah. One such document was the letter of the Trieste rabbis in support of Naphtali Herz Wessely in his *Divrei Shalom Ve'emet* (Words of Peace and Truth) dispute against some Orthodox rabbis. This document recreated a major Haskalah controversy of the 1780s, showing the Italian rabbis' support of Wessely's position expressed in his educational treatise. The Maskilim also published Rabbi Eybeschütz's letter about Moses Mendelssohn in which the rabbi expressed his admiration and respect for the young philosopher.

It could be concluded that generally *Kerem Hemed* did exhibit a direct connection to the heritage of the early Haskalah. It cited repeatedly the founding fathers of the Berlin Haskalah and their literary achievements. Some writers mentioned Joel Brill and Moses Mendelssohn's edition of the Book of Psalms, and referred to the commentaries and linguistic writings of Wessely and Juda Leib Ben Zeev.

A major maskilic event in Galician Jewish life was the appointment of Rapoport, a traditionalist Maskil, as rabbi in Tarnopol. *Kerem Hemed* accentuated this appointment as a major achievement in Jewish life in which a Maskil who is a modern scholar was recognized as deserving to assume the position of a religious and spiritual leader of an established Jewish community. His colleagues supported him enthusiastically, praising his appointment, and wrote glorifying poems commemorating the event.⁷⁰

Central ideas that were advocated by the Haskalah are resonating in some articles. For example, Rapoport argued in an article that love of one's fellow Jew does not preclude love of man in general. The attitude of Jews toward gentiles was also the theme of Perl's article that asserted that the biblical term for 'friend' may be applied also to non-Jews.⁷¹ The Haskalah's openness to the outside world and to European culture is advocated in several of the articles.

Thus, *Kerem Hemed* may be justly considered as a full-fledged Haskalah journal that followed in the footsteps of previous Haskalah periodicals although with some modifications dictated by time and place and by its scholarly orientation.

Philosophy and Thought of *Hochmat Israel* Scholars

In the main, *Kerem Hemed* reflected some aspects of the scholarship and *Weltanschauung* of the Galician and Italian Hebrew scholars, and a few of the German scholars. True, their essays and research studies published in *Kerem Hemed* are only a small part of their work. Nevertheless they

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, I (1833), pp. 90–92.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, IV (1839), pp. 241–249.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, III (1838), pp. 211–219.

represent the scholars' methodology of research in Jewish heritage, and the ways that they had perceived and interpreted Judaism. In their writings in *Kerem Hemed* one can also detect their personalities, their moods, and their religious predilection. Rapoport appears to be detailed and exact in his writings; Luzzatto — traditional in his conservative views, while a scholar like Geiger seems to be motivated by his religious reform orientation.

The scholars' images are reflected also by what their fellow scholars said about them: Krochmal as he is portrayed by Rapoport in his eulogy of him, and similarly, in Reggio's lamentation of him; likewise, Perl — in Rapoport's eulogy. At times, these scholars expressed their views about themselves. Rapoport expressed his love for his people, even though no one doubted it, except his opponents, and Luzzatto expressed his view of himself, saying that he was not a fanatic in his scholarly approach to biblical criticism and in his interpretation of Judaism.

Science in *Kerem Hemed*

Volume one of *Kerem Hemed* carried a series of articles on basic science, following the trend of earlier periodicals. However, this did not continue in the ensuing volumes. Instead, the scientific method was delegated to discussions on astrology and the Hebrew calendar, and science was used to explain halachic matters, or some geometric matters found in medieval manuscripts.⁷²

Belles Lettres* in *Kerem Hemed

The share of *belles lettres* in *Kerem Hemed* was very minimal and it is found mostly in Erter's satires,⁷³ in some fables that were printed incidentally, and in some poems by Luzzatto and others in honor of Rapoport's ascension to the rabbinic post. One may add Rapoport's review of Perl's satire, and a review of Rabbi Moshe Sofer's books written as a pungent satire.

Editorship of Goldenberg and Sachs

In final assessment of the editorship of *Kerem Hemed*, a major difference is noted between Goldenberg, the first editor of the journal, and Sachs, its last editor. Goldenberg engaged mostly in soliciting letters and articles and forwarding them to other scholars, requesting their comments and annotations; he arranged the material in the volumes and submitted it to the

⁷² *Ibid.*, I (1833), pp. 60–68. For articles on the Hebrew calendar, see the index, Pelli, *Kerem Hemed: 'Hochmat Israel' Hee Yavneh Hahadashah*, pp. 209–211.

⁷³ *Kerem Hemed*, I (1833), pp. 135–139; II (1836), pp. 138–147; III (1838, pp. 107–111).

printer. He also wrote introductions to some of the volumes, and published several of his own articles as prefaces to other scholars' articles. In addition, he wrote the report about Rapoport's appointment as rabbi in Tarnopol.⁷⁴ Goldenberg added some annotations to several articles, but it was mostly Rapoport and sometimes Krochmal who added learned comments to other scholars' articles.

Sachs, on the other hand, was an active scholar himself, and the contributors recognized him as such. His editing was more focused, and he added long comments to articles published in the two volumes under his editorship. He also contributed his own scholarly articles. The practice of adding comments to articles indicates a policy of free investigation and openness to criticism in *Kerem Hemed*.

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The correspondence between and among the learned Maskilim, published in *Kerem Hemed*, which initially was personal, became public domain having public interest in it. These learned letters documented the state of the study of Judaism at that time and the state of Hebrew Haskalah itself.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, IV (1839), pp. 241–245.

HASKALAH AND BEYOND

CHAPTER NINE: AFTERMATH OF THE HASKALAH — AN OVERVIEW

The German Haskalah, emerging in 1780s, was short lived, and by 1811, with the final demise of the new *Hame'asef*, its Hebrew activities were curtailed and its ideals of reviving the Hebrew language and literature, were transformed to another venue. From the 1820s and 1830s the center of the Haskalah movement flourished in the Austro-Hungarian empire, especially in Italy and Galicia, having the Hebrew journal *Bikurei Ha'itim* (1820–1831), published in Vienna, as its main literary organ.

Developments in Nineteenth-Century Haskalah

Subsequently, the Haskalah made headway further east to Russia, Poland and Lithuania. Its ideological platform, as developed initially in Germany, had been modified to fit the needs and the circumstances of Jews and Maskilim in Eastern Europe. This version of Haskalah continued to disseminate its cultural ideology among its expanding circle of new followers. Concurrently, Haskalah writers and poets continued to produce numerous creative works in prose and poetry, expressing their thoughts and feelings in various literary genres. Finally, in mid-century, Haskalah produced its first novel, *Ahavat Zion* (The Love of Zion, 1853), by Abraham Mapu (1808–1867), followed by more novels, short stories, the emergence of serious literary criticism, and the development of the Hebrew press.

Concurrently, a group of Hebrew Maskilim engaged in the study of historical Judaism and its literary heritage, known as *Hochmat Israel* (The Scholarly Study of Judaism). Their German counterparts, writing mostly in German, were similarly engaged in the “Wissenschaft des Judentums,” the scholarly study of the Jewish religion and its people, resulting among other things in creating a modern Jewish historiography.

The interpretation and the actual execution of the ideology of Haskalah, at times, became more aggressive as various Maskilim struggled against the traditionalist rabbis, advocating reforms in Judaism. At the same time, the

Galician Haskalah fought an up hill battle against Hasidism, the popular orthodox movement that emerged in the eighteenth century in Eastern Europe among the Jewish masses.

Among the Hebraists who were very critical of the Talmud — the post-biblical compilation of Jewish law and rabbinic learning, which became the focal study of contemporary rabbinic Judaism — was Joshua Heschel Schorr (1818–1895). He was the editor of a progressive journal, *Hechalutz*, and used his journal for unflinching his attacks on rabbinic Judaism and on traditional rabbis.

Later on, some of the Maskilim, notably Moshe Leib Lilienblum (1843–1910), were engaged in acrimonious controversies in their desire to invigorate the Jews and Judaism by reforming and revising some aspects of traditional Judaism, such as excessive customs and burdensome restrictions.

The thrust of one hundred years of Haskalah, which had as its goal to revive the Jewish people in the Diaspora, generally aimed to integrate Jewish culture into the European ‘enlightened’ culture. Thus, the Maskilim intended to solve ‘the Jewish problem’ within the European setting, while creating a modern-day ‘renaissance’ of Hebrew Enlightenment, wishing to uplift and invigorate the Jewish people by means of enlightenment, humanism, and tolerance.

1881: Disillusionment from Haskalah

However, this trend came to a halt in 1881, mostly as a result of a series of pogroms that were perpetrated against the Jews in the south of Russia. A disillusionment from the main stream Haskalah emerged as several groups of Maskilim mostly in Russia launched the ‘Love of Zion’ movement, which began reorienting the Jews toward their ancient homeland in the land of Israel. Thus, the Jewish desire for a cultural renaissance within the parameter of the Haskalah now transformed to a desire for a national renaissance.

Prior to that there were several rabbinic interpretations of the notion of messianic redemption (*ge'ulah*), traditionally delegated to the divine, in human terms. They called for the establishment of Jewish nationalism in the Jewish historical homeland as the beginning of this human redemption. One such proponent was by Rabbi Yehudah Alkalai (1798–1878) who as early as 1834 advocated the building of Jewish colonies in the Holy Land in his booklet titled *Shema Israel* (Hear, O Israel). Another was Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Kalischer (1795–1874) who in 1836 presented the notion that “the beginning of the redemption should come through natural causes by human

effort.”¹ Both were considered to be the forerunners or precursors of Zionism, as the notion of divine redemption has been shifting to human spheres even among some traditional rabbis. A more secular approach to the same issue was that of Moses Hess (1812–1875), a journalist and a social activist and one of the thinkers of socialism, who in *Rome and Jerusalem* (1862) advocated the restoration of a Jewish state.²

It was the beginning of a national movement that has emerged in the aftermath of the nationalistic trends in Europe in mid century and the ‘Spring of Nations’ in 1848. In Jewish circles, the national orientation promoted the idea of solving the ‘Jewish question’ not in Europe but in the land of Israel, which culminated in the emergence of Zionist ideology in the 1890s.

The change of heart in the attitude toward Haskalah permeated the literature ever since the 1870s as the idea of a national ‘renaissance’ has been slowly developing. In 1875, Peretz Smolenskin (1842–1885), the editor of the Hebrew monthly *Hashahar* (Dawn), and a prolific essayist and novelist, began to advocate the idea of ‘reviving’ the people. He criticized the extreme exponents of early German Haskalah who, according to him, were responsible for the radical tendencies that led its followers away from the Hebrew culture and traditional Judaism.

Smolenskin’s Criticism of the Berlin Haskalah

Smolenskin was very critical of the assimilation trends that came in the heels of the Berlin Haskalah, blaming Moses Mendelssohn and his followers for all the calamities that occurred to Judaism and the Jews in the nineteenth century. His main argument against Mendelssohn and the Berlin Haskalah was that they identified the Jews as belonging to one faith, thus eliminating any notion of Jewish peoplehood.³ Smolenskin published his views in a series of articles titled “Et Lata’at” (Time to Plant), which according to the

¹ See Yehudah Alkalay, *Ketavim* [Writings] (Jerusalem, 1944); Zvi Kalischer, *Derishat Zion* [Search for Zion] (Torun, 1866); see also Arthur Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea* (New York, 1984), pp. 101–114.

² Moshe Hess, *Roma Virushalayim* [Rome and Jerusalem] (Warsaw, 1899); see also Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea*, pp. 116–139.

³ Perez Smolenskin, *Ma’amarim* [Articles], II (Jerusalem, 1925), pp. 8–17, 68, 75, 78, *et passim*.

literary historian Joseph Klausner signaled “the end of the Haskalah period and the beginning of the period of Nationalism and the Love of Zion.”⁴

Smolenskin’s attack on Mendelssohn and on the Berlin Haskalah was rejected by another prominent Maskil, Abraham Baer Gottlober (1811–1899). Gottlober defended both the German philosopher and his followers in a journal which he launched in 1876, *Haboker Or* ([First] Light of Morning), and argued that Smolenskin misread and misinterpreted Mendelssohn and the other Maskilim.⁵

As the criticism of Haskalah grew, another young writer, Eliezer Ben Yehuda, whose name will rise in the forefront of Hebrew culture in the following half century, entered into the national debate. He was to be considered later as the father of modern Hebrew, in effect one of the revivers of spoken Hebrew.

In an article that he published in Smolenskin’s journal, *Hashahar*, in 1878, titled “She’elah Nichbadah” (A Venerable Question),⁶ Ben Yehuda advocated the right and the necessity to resort to Jewish nationalism. Following the nationalistic trends that emerged in Europe earlier in that century, he argued for the legitimate adherence to a new form of Jewish nationalism. He examined the required attributes of a people, a discussion of which flourished at that time, such as a common language, common heritage, common religion, showing their applicability to the Jewish people.⁷

Ben Yehuda then argued that Hebrew literature till then did not affect the life of the Jewish people in any significant way. To him, it was a divisive force that rather than uniting the people under one flag and one goal shattered its unity. That literature, he wrote, looked at the past rather than face the future. Its aspiration to revive the Hebrew language while the Jewish people was dispersed in many countries is futile. Here Ben Yehuda suggested the solution that foreshadows the national discussion for the next quarter century.⁸ He argued that a center has to be created for the emerging nationalism, a center for the whole people, which will be the ‘heart’ “from which the blood will flow in the veins of the people and will give it life,” and this thing is “the settlement of the land of Israel.”⁹ Klausner considers Ben Yehuda’s article “the first article for the new Love of Zion that was

⁴ Joseph Klausner, *Historiah Shel Hasifrut Ha’ivrit Hahadashah* [History of Modern Hebrew Literature], V (Jerusalem, 1955²), p. 104.

⁵ Abraham Baer Gottlober, “Et La’akor Natu’a” [Time to Uproot that which is Planted], *Haboker Or* [(First) Light of Morning], I (1, 1786), pp. 4–17; (2, 1786), pp. 77–86.

⁶ [Eliezer] Ben Yehuda, “She’elah Nichbadah” [A Venerable Question], *Hashahar*, IX (1878), pp. 359–366.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 362.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 364.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 365.

published in *Hashahar*.¹⁰ Later, Ahad Ha'am advocated the idea of creating a spiritual center in the land of Israel.

Other critics, such as Avraham Uri Kovner (1842–1909) and David Frischmann (1859–1922), were critical of literary aspects of Haskalah. One of the main arguments against the literature of the Haskalah was that it did not reflect the actual life of the people neither did it address the issues related to the people. By the 1890s, one of the most vociferous opponents of Haskalah was Mordechai Ehrenpreis (1869–1951) who heralded the emergence of a new type of Hebrew literature, the literature known as ‘Hatehiyah,’ actually meaning revival or renaissance.

‘Hatehiyah,’ Renaissance of Hebrew Letters

In a seminal article published in 1897 in the intellectual organ of Hebrew writers, *Hashiloah*, Ehrenpreis announced a revision in the attitude of the new breed of Hebrew writers toward their literature. He declared war against that kind of undertaking, which we call “Haskalah.” The group of young writers does not purport to continue the literary work done in previous generations since the time of the Me’asfim, the writers active in the first Hebrew journal, *Hame’asef*, but intend to start a new kind of literature, new in its format and contents.¹¹ He believed that the early Maskilim could not have created “a literary movement that was attuned to the life of the nation” because they were dilettantes. He further accused them of not being a product of their time and place, and that they did not relate to the cultural life of their time.¹²

In 1903, Ehrenpreis declared the younger generation’s independence from the shackles of the past: “It is the uprising of the new generation in our Hatehiyah movement,” he wrote. “The new generation will not waste its strength on negative war; it wants a positive endeavor; it does not fight *against* the old, but *for* the new.”¹³ Ehrenpreis further pronounced the motto of this new generation, proclaiming its notion of renaissance: “Here we came, men of freedom, full of faith! We freed ourselves of the shackles of sickly, rotting, dying tradition; a tradition that cannot live and does not want

¹⁰ Klausner, *Historiah Shel Hasifrut Ha’ivrit Hahadashah*, V, p. 104.

¹¹ Mordechai Ehrenpreis, “Le’an?” [Whither?], *Hashiloah*, I (1897), pp. 489–503.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 490–491.

¹³ Mordechai Ehrenpreis, “Hashkafah Sifrutit” [Literary Outlook], *Hashiloah*, XI (1903), pp. 186–192, the quotation on p. 186.

to die [...]. We freed ourselves of the extra spirituality of the *galut* [exile], that spirituality that removed the Jew away from this world, that made our lives to be but a shadow of life [...]. We freed ourselves from the rabbinic culture, that encased us in a narrow cage of legal decrees, restrictions and prohibitions [...] we freed ourselves from that despair that characterized the Jewish street [...]. In as much as we removed ourselves from tradition, we also removed ourselves from its opponent, the Haskalah [...]. We freed ourselves from the yoke of superficial, fake and arid Haskalah.”¹⁴

This was the new Renaissance that was sounded at the *fin de siècle*.

The major pundit of the national revival movement at the end of the nineteenth century and the first part of the twentieth century was Ahad Ha'am (pseudonym of Asher Ginsberg, 1856–1927). His interpretation of the idea of Zionism argued that prior to any physical revival of the people in the land of Israel, there should first be the preparation and the education of the individual Jew. “We should have dedicated our first actions to the revival of the hearts,” he wrote, and by this he meant the preparation of the people for a united national goal.¹⁵

Consequently, Ginsberg fostered the idea of building a ‘spiritual center’ in the land of Israel. As compared to Theodor Herzl’s concept of political Zionism, his was a spiritual Zionism. He argued that “the work of revival should not be limited just to establishing the material aspects [...] we have to create there a permanent and free center for our national culture: for science, art and literature.”¹⁶

While this period was considered to be the “Hatehiyah period,” by its own proponents’ definition, literary scholars such as Shimon Halkin debunked this notion. He argued that the *desire* for ‘tehiyah’ was confused with the ‘tehiyah’ itself. Thus, he asserts that the period was not a renaissance, but merely a desire for such. This Renaissance, he argued in 1920, was still pending.¹⁷ It came to fruition in the extraordinary development of Hebrew writing as well as the revival of Jewish life, culture and literature in the twentieth century.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 186.

¹⁵ Ahad Ha'am, “Lo Zeh Haderech” [This Is Not the Way]], *Kol Kitvei Ahad Ha'am* [The Complete Writings of Ahad Ha'am] (Tel Aviv, 1956⁵), pp. 11–14.

¹⁶ *Idem*, “Tehiyat Haru'ah” [Revival of the Spirit], *ibid*, pp. 173–186 esp. p. 181.

¹⁷ Shimon Halkin, “Tekufat Hatehiyah” [The Period of Tehiyah], *Derachim Vetzidei Derachim Basifrut* [Ways and Byways in Literature], I (Jerusalem, 1969), pp. 49–52; the article was written in 1920.

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