

MOSHE PELLI. *Sha 'ar la-haskalah: Mafteah mu 'ar leba-Me 'asef, ketav-ha-'et ha-'Ivri ha-rishon* (The Gate to Haskalah: An Annotated Index to *Hame'asef*, The First Hebrew Journal). Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2000. Pp. xi + 221.

A first reaction to this enormously rich, informative, and educational volume, even prior to a scholarly response, is one of stupendous appreciation and equally immense admiration. This scholarly volume is a formidably crafted treasure chock full of paramount information, dates, names, titles, and entries. All these items, put together, compose an elucidating, well-wrought mosaic that dexterously introduces the aesthetic and ideological history of the foundation of modern Hebrew literature and thought at the end of the eighteenth century in Germany.

Pelli's work maps the intricate portrait of the evolutionary dawn of modern Hebrew literature, thought, and science. The Haskalah had been the bedrock on which modern Hebrew language, literature, philosophy, biblical studies, and science had developed and had begun to thrive, dramatically changing the Jewish artistic, philosophical, and scientific worlds. Correspondingly, this book focuses quite clearly on *Hame'asef* (gathering, collection), the first scientific-literary Hebrew periodical that was created and published since the Jewish creation of secular science. Since the periodical was written in Hebrew and was muted by talmudic and post-talmudic scholarship, *Hame'asef* was the first harbinger of a renaissance of modern Hebrew Haskalah.

This excellent book consists of two parts. The first part portrays the literary, scholarly, and philosophical trends introduced by the volumes of *Hame'asef* and focuses on specific works included in the journal. This part also discusses the different personal and scholarly credos and proclivities of the creators of those works. Pelli discusses and introduces *Hame'asef* in the illuminating comparative context of other, non-Hebrew periodicals that were published in Europe during its time.

The second part of the book consists of a remarkably rich and detailed index that includes all the writers, works of literature, philosophy, biblical commentary, and science ever published in the volumes of *Hame'asef*. Overall, the book conceives and produces an insightful portrayal of the gate to Haskalah, the springboard from which modern Hebrew literature and thought was launched.