

Isaac Euchel: Tradition and Change in the First Generation Haskalah Literature in Germany (I)

I SAAC EUCHEL¹ should be distinguished for his many contributions to modern Hebrew literature, and should be given proper credit for his many “firsts” in the Haskalah movement in Germany during the last quarter of the eighteenth century. He is regarded by many as the initiator of the Hebrew periodical press, being the first editor of *Hame’asef*, although others give Moses Mendelssohn the credit for starting the first Hebrew periodical, *Qohelet Musar*. It was Mendelssohn who became the subject of Euchel’s other “first,” that of a biographer. For Euchel is the author of a full biography of the so-called Jewish Socrates, first serialized in *Hame’asef*, and

¹ Biographies, biographical sketches and notes on Isaac Euchel [or Eichel] could be found in the following works (arranged in chronological order), in addition to works cited later on in this study: Meir Halevi LETTERIS, “Toldot Hehacham R. Itzik Eichel Z.L.,” [The Life Story of the Sage Rabbi Isaac Euchel*], in the second edition of *Hame’asef*, I (1784), published in Wien in 1862, pp. 41–47, the first biography of Euchel, which contains some inaccuracies. Letteris republished this biography, with slight changes, in his *Zikaron Basefer* [Memoirs in the Book] (Wien, 1869), pp. 90–97, Samuel Joseph FÜNN, *Kneset Yisra’el* [The Assembly of Israel] (Warsaw, 1886), p. 96. Zalman REJZEN, *Lexicon fun der Yudisher Literatur un Presse* (Warsaw, 1914), ss. 42–43 [Yiddish]. *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, V (New York & London, 1916), p. 265 [article by A. Ko.=Adolf KOHUT]. H. VOGELSTEIN, “Handschriftliches zu Isaak Abraham Euchels Biographie,” *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Juden* [M. Philippon’s Festschrift] (Leipzig, 1916), ss. 225–231 [Several farewell writings by the *maskilim* given to Euchel on the occasion of his 1784 journey, and the text of his will]. Zalman REJZEN, *Lexicon fun der Yidisher Literatur, Presse un Philologie*, I (Vilna, 1926), s. 79 [Yiddish]. Jacob SHATZKY, “Naye Arbeten zur der Geshichte fun der Yidisher Literatur,” *Pinqas*, (New York, July–December, 1927), ss. 175–176 [Yiddish; updating and correcting some of the data on Euchel as found in works published till 1927, which are cited above, and which will be cited below under “short references of Euchel”]. M.E. [Max ERIK], “Di Geshichte mit Eichels Hebraisher Dozentur in Königsberger Universitat”; “Ven is Eichel Geboirn Gevorn?,” *Di Yidische Shprach*, III (No. 4–5, July–October, 1929), s. 54 [Yiddish: On Euchel’s birth date, and the question of his candidacy as lecturer at the Königsberg University]. Max ERIK, “Di Ershte Yidische Comedie,” *Philologische Shriften*, III (Vilna, 1929), ss. 555–584 [Yiddish; A detailed discussion of Euchel’s biography and literary works and activities based on Letteris, Vogelstein and Simonsen. The great part of the article is devoted to an analysis of Euchel’s play, its contents, ideas, and its relation to the Enlightenment campaign]. *idem*, “Naye Materialien vegen Eichelen,” *Zeitschrift fun dem Yidsector fun der Veisrusisher Visenschaft-Akademie*, V (Minsk, 1931), ss. 285–294 [Yiddish; updating data and discussing Euchel’s play]. *The Hebrew Encyclopedia*, II (Jerusalem & Tel Aviv, 1957), pp. 815–816 [article by G.E. = Gedalyahu ELKOSHI]. *Encyclopedia Judaica*, VI (Jerusalem, 1971), pp. 956–957 [article by G. El. = Gedalyahu ELKOSHI]. Also: ‘Ozar Yisra’el [The Treasure of Israel], I (London, 1935), pp. 269–270.

Short references of Euchel: J.M. JOST, *Geschichte der Israeliten*, IX (Berlin, 1828), ss. 85–86, 92. Adam MARTINET, *Tiferet Yisra’el* [The Glory of Israel] Bamberg, 1837, s. 344. Franz DELITZSCH, *Zur Geschichte der jüdischen Poësie* (Leipzig, 1836), s. 100. *Dansk Biografisk Lexikon*, IV (1890), pp. 618–619 [Danish; Article on Gottlieb Euchel by D. SIMONSEN; published also in the second edition, 1935, VI]. Samuel Joseph FÜNN, *Safah Lene’emanim* [Language for (of the) Trustworthy] (Vilna, 1881), pp. 91, 97–98 [published previously in *Hakarmel*, IV (1879)]. Israel DAVIDSON, *The Genesis of Hebrew Periodical Literature* (Baltimore, 1900), pp. 6–7. Elazar SCHULMANN, *Sfat Yehudit-Ashkenazit Vesifrutah* [Judeo-German Language and Its Literature] (Riga, 1913), pp. 175–176. D. SIMONSEN, “Mendelssohniana — aus Dänemark,” *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Juden* (Leipzig, 1916), s. 214. Josef MEISL, *Haskalah* (Berlin, 1919), ss. 23, 47. J.L. LANDAU, *Short Lectures*

*) All books and articles whose title is translated into English are in Hebrew.

subsequently published as a separate volume. In addition, Euchel is to be recognized for the introduction of some European literary genres into Hebrew literature such as the first modern satire which is also the first modern literary, epistolary writing.² In the German Haskalah movement, he should be given the credit for founding the first groups of *maskilim*,³ and for being the first Hebrew writer in modern times to translate the prayerbook into German.⁴ Furthermore, in the field of Yiddish literature he is being regarded as the writer of the first modern Yiddish play.

It is perhaps ironic that Yiddish writers have scrutinized some aspects of

on Modern Hebrew Literature (Johannesburg, 1923), pp. 65, 68, 73. Zalman REJZEN, *Fun Mendelssohn biz Mendele* (Warsaw, 1923), ss. 20, 25 [Yiddish]. A.A. ROBACK, *Jewish Influence in Modern Thought* (Cambridge, Mass., 1929), pp. 356–366. N.O. [Nahum OISLANDER], "Itzik Eichel un di Shprachenfrage," *Bibliologischer Samelbuch*, I (Moscow, 1930), s. 516 [Yiddish]. Zalman REJZEN, "Di Manuskripten un Druken fun Itzik Eichels 'R. Henoch,'" *Archiv far der Geschichte fun Yudishen Teater und Drama*, I (Vilna & New York, 1930), ss. 86–146 [Yiddish; including the full text of Euchel's play]. Dov WEINRYB, "The First Realistic Hebrew Play," *Davar*, Literary Supplement (March 29, 1935), p. 2 [Hebrew]. Bernard D. WEINRYB, "An Unknown Hebrew Play of the German Haskalah," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, XXIV (1955), p. 169, *idem*, "Aaron Wolfsohn's Dramatic Writings in the Historical Setting," *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, XLVIII (No. 1, July 1957), pp. 40–44. Mordechai ELIAV, *Jewish Education in Germany* (Jerusalem, 1960), pp. 52, 55, 59 [Hebrew]. Joseph KLAUSNER, *Historiah Shel Hasifrut Hahadashah* [History of Modern Hebrew Literature], I (Jerusalem, 1960), pp. 160–161. Ch. SZMERUK, "The Name Mordechai-Marcus — Literary Metamorphosis of a Social Ideal," *Tarbiz*, XXIX (1960), p. 77 [Hebrew].

Bibliographical lists of Euchel's works: V.H. SCHMIDT & D. G. MEHRING, *Neuestes Gelehrtes Berlin*, (Berlin, 1795), ss. 116–117 [Euchel's own list]. Julius FÜRST, *Bibliotheca Judaica*, I (Leipzig, 1849), ss. 259–260. M. STEINSCHNEIDER, *Catalogus Librorum in Bibliotheca Bodleiana*, II (Berlin, 1852–1860 [facsimile editions: Berlin, 1931; Hildesheim, 1964]), pp. 974–975. Joseph ZEDNER, *Catalogus of the Hebrew Books in the Library of the British Museum* (London, 1867 [facsimile edition: 1964]), pp. 244, 690. M. ROEST, *Catalog der Hebraica und Judaica aus der L. Rosenthal'schen Bibliothek*, I (Amsterdam, 1785 [facsimile edition: Amsterdam, 1966]), s. 365. Isaac BEN YA'AKOV, 'Ozar Hasfarim [Treasure of Books], I (Vilna, 1880 [facsimile edition: New York, no date given]), pp. 608, 620. William ZEITLIN, *Bibliotheca Hebraica* (Leipzig, 1891), s. 83. Moïse SCHWAB, *Répertoire des Articles* (Paris, 1914–1923), p. 119. A. E. COWLEY, *A Concise Catalogus of the Hebrew Printed Books in the Bodleian Library* (Oxford, 1929), p. 191. M. E. [Max ERIK], "Zu der Bibliographie fun Eichels Shriften biz 1795," *Bibliologischer Samelbuch*, I (Moscow, 1930), ss. 512–513 [Cites Euchel's own apparent list of his writings in *Neuestes Gelehrtes Berlin*, which is listed above] Max ERIK, "Naye Materialen [...]," cited above under Euchel's biographies. Ch. B. FRIEDBERG, *Bei 'Eged Sfarim* [Bibliographical Lexicon] (Tel Aviv, 1951). *Dictionnaire Catalog of the Jewish Collection, New York Public Library*, III (Boston, 1960), pp. 2714–2715. *Harvard University Library Catalogue of Hebrew Books*, I (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), pp. 585–586.

Discussion of Euchel's literary works and Enlightenment activities could be found in the following works: Nahum STIF, "Literatur-historische Legendes," *Di Roite Velt*, VII–VIII (March 1926), ss. 152–157; X (October, 1926), ss. 97–105 [Yiddish]. Max ERIK, *Di Comedies fun der Berliner Aufklärung*, (Kiev, 1933) ss. 42–43, 48–59 [Yiddish]. Euchel's family tree is given in Josef FISCHER, *Stamavlén Eichel* (Kopenhagen, 1904).

² Although it should be noted that epistolary writings which are not literary and imaginative had been in vogue before.

³ In 1783 Euchel was one of the founders of "Havurat Dorshei Leshon 'Ever" [The Society of the Seekers, or Friends, of the Hebrew Language]; see "*Nahal Habsor*" [The Brook 'Besor', or Good Tidings], pp. 5, 14–15, bound with *Hame'asef*, I (1784). And in 1792 he was one of the founders of the "Gesellschaft der Freunde," of which society he was the director in 1797–1801 (see Ludwig LESSER, *Chronik der Gesellschaft der Freunde* (Berlin, 1842), s. 8, and the table in the end).

⁴ Isaac Abraham EUCHEL, *Gebete der hochdeutschen und polnischen Juden* (Königsberg, 1786). David Friedländer published his translation of the prayerbook in the same year.

Euchel's writings, and delved into his biography more than the Hebrew writers.⁵ Of course, the Yiddish scholars have had Euchel's contribution to Yiddish drama in mind, yet they probed into his life and work in the domain of Hebrew, too, which is more than could be said about Hebrew scholars. Interestingly enough, this state of affairs led a noted Hebrew lexicographer a few years ago to publish an "open" letter to Euchel in a literary supplement of a popular Israeli daily, lamenting Euchel's disappearance into a literary oblivion. In this letter he calls for Euchel's rehabilitation, while crediting him for "opening a new epoch in the annals of Hebrew culture, literature and journalism."⁶ In spite of Euchel's apparent importance, an extensive study of his work, an analysis of his views regarding both Enlightenment and Judaism, and an evaluation of his place and role in Hebrew Haskalah literature are still wanting. Despite the many contributions of the above-mentioned Yiddish writers to the understanding of Euchel, it must be pointed out that important as they are, their discussions of that *maskil* do not take into consideration the vast canvas of contemporary Hebrew literary efforts in Germany. As a result, many vital aspects of Euchel's literary and ideological works have remained rather in the shadow. It is for this reason that the present study is undertaken.

STATE OF THE STUDY OF EUCHEL

Generally speaking, the discussions regarding Euchel fall into two categories: a. Discourses of Euchel's stand concerning religious matters; b. Discourses of Euchel's Hebrew style, his writings and his Haskalah activities. While the vast majority of the students of Euchel's writings consider him as an extremist from a religious standpoint, three scholars, representing two completely different periods, are of the opinion that Isaac Euchel is rather a moderate *maskil*. The first was Isaac Samuel Reggio in the nineteenth century. Disputing what he considered to be the false interpretation of Mendelssohn's intention in his writings, especially in *Jerusalem*, by his students, colleagues and followers, Reggio draws his support from Euchel. He believes that Euchel is the true interpreter of Mendelssohn's views in *Jerusalem* as translated into Hebrew in the former's biography of Mendelssohn. Thus Reggio considers Euchel to be the authentic student and follower of the moderate Mendelssohn, for he opposed the latter's extreme interpreters, namely, David Friedländer, Herz Homberg and Moses Hirschel.⁷

Euchel's first biographer, Meir Halevi Letteris, too, writes very

⁵ See note 1 above. For some evaluation of their research tendencies and attitude toward the Hebrew Haskalah see WEINRYB, "Aaron Wolfsohn's Dramatic Writings," pp. 42-44.

⁶ G. KRESSEL, "Michtav Le'Itzik Eichel" [A Letter to Isaac Euchel], *Ma'ariv* (December 15, 1961), p. 14.

⁷ See REGGIO'S edition of Elijah DELMEDIGO, *Behinat Hadat* [Examining Religion] (Wien, 1833), p. 126, note; Reggio's opposition to the interpretation of Mendelssohn by his students appeared first in his *Hatorah Vehaphilosofiah* [Torah and Philosophy] (Wien, 1827), pp. 161-162.

positively about this *maskileven* when he cites such of his controversial works as the translation of the prayerbook into German and “‘Igrot Meshulam ben ‘Uriyah Ha’eshtemo” [The Letters of Meshulam]. On the latter, Letteris writes that these letters, “were more precious than pure gold.”⁸ One does not know whether Letteris is appreciative of the style, literary qualities, or the ideas in “‘Igrot Meshulam.” However, one may assume that Letteris meant all three criteria. Euchel’s endeavors for the introduction of *Hochmah* among the Jews are highly praised.⁹ Both Reggio and Letteris, *maskilim* on their own right, functioned in the nineteenth century.

Recently, a modern scholar, Bernard Weinryb, expressed his view of Euchel as a moderate in his religious outlook. His moderation, however, is not without hesitations. For Weinryb includes this *maskil* among those who were attracted emotionally to the traditional milieu that had enriched them although they have not fully fitted into their environment.¹⁰

However, this view of Euchel as a moderate is shared only by the minority of writers. Most scholars are of a different opinion. This trend has begun apparently by Ludwig Geiger in his book on the Jews in Berlin. In it, Geiger sees in Euchel the antithesis of Wessely respecting their Enlightenment tendencies, and cites actual ideological and religious disputes between the two.¹¹ According to Geiger, not only did Euchel forsake the traditional views

⁸ LETTERIS, *Zikaron Basefer*, p. 94; the same appeared before in his “Toldot Heḥacham R. Itzik Eichel Z.L.,” p. 44.

⁹ *Zikaron Basefer*, p. 95; “Toldot [. . .] Eichel,” p. 44.

¹⁰ Bernard D. WEINRYB, “Enlightenment and German-Jewish *Haskalah*,” *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* (Genève, 1963), pp. 1831–1832, 1840.

¹¹ In Mendelssohn’s home. See Ludwig GEIGER, *Geschichte der Juden in Berlin*, I (Berlin, 1871), s.91. This report, which is not supported by any documentation, probably originated with David Friedländer. Letteris, in his biography of Euchel, relates Friedländer’s story “of one argument on the creation of the world which he [Euchel] had with R. Herz Wessely in the presence of Mendelssohn. In it, Euchel manifested his great strength in the way of the new investigation and his utterances were like a powerful wind.” Letteris cites his source: “[S]M]. *Mendelssohn, Fragmente von ihm und über ihn*, von David FRIEDLÄNDER. [Berlin 1819].” (“Toldot Eichel,” p. 42, note; *Zikaron Basefer*, p. 92). Friedländer relates this argument between the old poet W — and the young man E — in pages 38–41. If there were a disagreement between the two, which we may accept as factual, it was indeed highly exaggerated in its implications and interpretation. No doubt that the two could have disagreed on a number of subjects, resulting from the difference in their *weltanschauung* and age (see for example Wessely’s criticism of the editors of *Hame’asef* on the question of *Gehinom* — *Hame’asef*, IV, 1788, pp. 97, 165). However, the two appear to be thinking very highly of each other. Wessely esteemed Euchel and his efforts to publish the Hebrew journal (“Naḥal Habsor,” p. 6: “an author and a *maskil* [or, learned person], having a precious spirit, my close friend” [“yedid nafshi,” literally: a friend of my soul]. He refers to him as a “beloved friend”). In 1784, Wessely writes to Euchel a very friendly farewell poem, on the occasion of the latter’s journey, speaking about “a sign of love between you and I” (VOGELSTEIN, “Handschriftliches zu Isaak Abraham Euchels Biographic,” s. 228). And in 1785 Wessely writes positively of Euchel’s translation into German (*Hame’asef*, II [1785], pp. 159–160). This esteem was two-ways: Euchel praises Wessely in 1788: “A man of clear thinking, pure heart, and his soul is very wide in the knowledge of the soul and in the depth of the Hebrew language” (Euchel’s introduction to volume IV, 1788, of *Hame’asef*, p. 5 [my pagination]). He further defends Wessely in his *Divrei Shalom Ve’emet* controversy, referring to him as “a friend of my heart” (Isaac EUCHEL, *Rabenu Heḥacham Moshe ben Menaḥem* [Our Rabbi the Sage M. b. M.] (Berlin, 1788), p. 34; identical with “Toldot Rabenu Moshe ben Menaḥem” [The Life Story of our Rabbi M. b. M.] *Hame’asef*, IV (1788), p. 178).

in his private life, but he moreover attacked them publicly in his attempts to reshape Jewish worship. Geiger bases these views of Euchel on the latter's translation of the prayerbook and on the satire he published in *Hame'asef*, namely, " 'Igrot Meshulam." However, he does not elaborate whatsoever and does not analyze any of Euchel's texts. An examination of this *maskil's* writings should produce ample proof whether Geiger's contentions are correct.

Following Geiger, Elazar Schulmann deems Euchel as the worse of all of Mendelssohn's fellow *maskilim* who went astray, such as Herz Homberg and Isaac Satanow. While he does think that Euchel indeed assisted favorably and positively in the enhancement of Haskalah, Schulmann is of the opinion that Euchel's overall activities and writings did damage to the cause of Haskalah.¹²

A few years later, a historian of Hebrew literature, Naḥum Slouschz, states that Euchel hated the rabbis and the talmudic scholars.¹³ Bernfeld, too, seems to have a negative opinion of Euchel. He quotes rabbi Zvi Hirsch Lewin's alleged saying on Euchel to the effect that this *maskil* did not observe the dietary laws. To Bernfeld, this unproven saying, which is based on Landshuth, is sufficient to signify Euchel's religious and Enlightenment stand.¹⁴ In the same vein is the contention of Erik that Euchel did not observe the religious ordinances. This allegation which has not been proven became an authoritative source for latter-day scholars.¹⁵

¹² Elazar SCHULMANN, *Mimqor Yisra'el* [From the Source of Israel] (Berdychev, 1892), p. 23. Schulmann's complete reliance on Geiger is stated in his text, and he, too, does not document his contentions.

¹³ Naḥum SLOUSCHZ, *Qorot Hasifrut Ha'ivrit Haḥadashah* [History of Modern Hebrew Literature], I (Warsaw, 1906), p. 36.

¹⁴ Simon BERNFELD, *Dor Tahapuchot* [A Froward Generation], I (Warsaw, 1914), p. 79: "[Euchel] ate forbidden food in public." Rabbi Lewin said about him: "We witness a world turned upside down! Previously the pig used to eat the fruit of Eichel [Eichel-Oak], but now Eichel eats the pig." The source of this information is Eliezer LANDSHUTH, *Toldot 'Anshei Hashem* [The Life Story of Prominent Persons], I (Berlin, 1884), p. 113; Landshuth writes that rabbi Lewin suspected Euchel of eating forbidden food, and he cites the saying without documenting it. Consult Moshe SAMET's article regarding the positive attitude of rabbi Lewin toward the *maskilim*, and Landshuth's wrong interpretation of Lewin's stand ("Mendelssohn, Weisel and the Rabbis of Their Time," *Studies in the History of the Jewish People and the Land of Israel* [Haifa, 1970], pp. 249, 253 [Hebrew]). This unproven characterization of Euchel finds its way also to the writings of Zinberg and Shoḥet. See: Israel ZINBERG, *Toldot Sifrut Yisra'el* [History of the Literature of Israel], V (Merḥavyah & Tel Aviv, 1959), p. 88; Azriel Shoḥet, "Reshit Hahaskalah Bayahadut Begermanyah," [The Beginning of Enlightenment in Jewry in Germany], *Molad*, XXIII (No. 203-4, September, 1965), p. 331. Shoḥet cites Bernfeld and Zinberg as his sources.

¹⁵ Max ERIK, *Di Comedies fun der Berliner Aufklärung*, s. 53: In his private life [he] was extremely free and not religious." In another article of his, Erik seems to reveal the source of his allegations regarding Euchel's observance of the religious ordinances; it is no other than Bernfeld: "Regarding Euchel's religious practice the anecdote which Bernfeld brings in his 'Dor Tahapuchot' is of importance: Euchel was not observant, he ate forbidden food in public, and the Berlin rabbi has said about it a witty saying: once a pig used to eat 'Eichlen,' now Eichel eats the pig" (Erik, "Di Geshichte mit Eichels [. . .]," s. 54). Thus we have an almost vicious circle whereby Erik relies on Bernfeld who in turn relies on Landshuth who did not document his allegation. The use of secondary, unchecked material, as in the case of Zinberg and Shoḥet (see note 14 above),

More modern students of the Hebrew Haskalah form their evaluation of Euchel's outlook on the basis of his satire "Igrot Meshulam ben 'Uriyah Ha'eshtemo'i." Sha'an'an expresses his opinion that "Euchel desires the Europeanization of Judaism after the style of Montesquieu." It should be noted that "Igrot Meshulam," as we shall see, were partially patterned after Montesquieu's *Persian Letters*. According to Sha'an'an, "Euchel sought to find the golden path between the European Enlightenment and the Hebrew tradition, the latter being free of the chains of rabbinic rule as well as free of the fences which the Middle Ages have set around it [. . .] Euchel and his colleagues sought to destroy that which was old and sanctified in the world of rabbinic Judaism."¹⁶ Sha'an'an is careful to point out that Euchel did not have assimilation in mind; it is apparent that although he considers Euchel to be a *maskil par excellence*, Sha'an'an is far from seeing him as an extremist comparable to, say, Friedländer and Homberg.¹⁷

It was Barzilay who went one step further and classified Euchel among the more extremist group of *maskilim* utilizing the same source material found in "Igrot Meshulam." "Euchel," writes Barzilay, "except for a degree of caution, did not differ in substance from the more extreme Maskilim."¹⁸ Mahler, too, considers Euchel as an extremist: "Among the Hebrew writers of that generation's *maskilim* there were only two, Euchel and Wolfssohn, who came close in their struggle against the religious tradition to the extremity of Saul Berlin."¹⁹

The second category of Euchel's evaluation is in the domain of his Hebrew activities, his style, and his contributions to Hebrew literature and to Hebrew

apparently for the sake of short cuts, is practiced by Barzilay, although in another work the latter reaches the same conclusion through evaluating Euchel's own writings (see note 18 below). His extremely important article is an interpretation of one of Agnon's short stories, "Levet 'Aba" [To Father's Home], where the figure of Euchel plays an enigmatic role [Samuel Joseph AGNON, *Samuch Venir'eh, Kol Sipurav Shel Sh. J. Agnon* [All the Stories of Agnon], VI, (Jerusalem & Tel Aviv, 1962), p. 104]. In it, Barzilay cites Erik as the source for "historical facts" regarding Euchel's practice (Isaac BARZILAY, "The Failure of the Return to the Past," *Hado'ar*, LII [No. 23, 1973], p. 364 [Hebrew]). He does say, however, that Agnon meant that Euchel was observing the Jewish law at least in public. Now, since the story takes place in the eve of Passover, Euchel's smoking of the cigarette is religiously permissible, and should not be used as an indication of Agnon's comment regarding Euchel's religious practices. Further, Euchel asked for fire to light his cigarette; transfer of fire, too, is permissible. It seems that the interpretation should try other avenues). See also M. Shalev's article in *Ha'areẓ*, September 22, 1968.

¹⁶ Avraham SHA'ANAN, *'Iyunim Besifrut Hahaskalah* [Studies in Haskalah Literature] (Merhavyah, 1952), pp. 75-76.

¹⁷ Although in another work SHA'ANAN believes that Euchel "was less subordinated to the authority of religious tradition than the other *me'asfim*" (*Hasifrut Ha'ivrit Haḥadashah Lizrameha* [Modern Hebrew Literature to Its Currents], I (Tel Aviv, 1962), p. 75.

¹⁸ Isaac EISENSTEIN-BARZILAY, "The Treatment of the Jewish Religion in the Literature of the Berlin Haskalah," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, XXIV (1955), pp. 40-41.

¹⁹ Raphael MAHLER, *Divrei Yemei Yisra'el Dorot Aḥaronim* [The History of Israel, . . . Latter Generations], II (Merhavyah, 1954²), p. 79. On the religious stand of rabbi Saul Berlin consult my studies "Some Notes on the Nature of Saul Berlin's Writings," *The Journal of Hebraic Studies*, I (2, 1970), pp. 47-61; "The Religious Reforms of 'Traditionalist' Rabbi Saul Berlin," *Hebrew Union College Annual*, XLII (1971), pp. 1-23, [Hebrew section].

Haskalah. The views on Euchel in this category, favorable in the main, when examined, would seem rather superficial. The writers expressing these views resorted to superlatives and generalities, both positive and negative, without the necessary employment of the tools of textual analysis. At times, the closeness of the views expressed of this *maskil* and the resemblance of terminology are indicative perhaps of a mutual source for the evaluation of Euchel's work. Letteris began the trend of praising Euchel for his contributions to Hebrew Haskalah literature.²⁰ It is ironic that Geiger, who set the tone for the evaluation of Euchel's religious stand, appears to have established also the line of a more favorable view of this *maskil* regarding his contribution to Hebrew letters. It was Geiger who crowned Euchel in his aforementioned book as the one "who rebuilt the Hebrew prose," comparing him to Wessely who revived the Hebrew poetry.²¹

Moses Mendelson of Hamburg regards Euchel as "a wonderful man in his very powerful ability in the Hebrew language," and he draws a very positive picture of Euchel's biography of Mendelssohn.²² L. Rosenthal's terminology resembles that of Mendelson: "He showed his power and the strength of his hand in the clarity of the language and the beauty of Melizah [artistic expression, poetry]." However, it appears that both Mendelson and Rosenthal owe their terminology to the first reviewer of Euchel's biography of Moses Mendelssohn. In this review, published in *Hame'asef* in 1789, the following phrase is used: "There he showed his power and the strength of his hand in the clarity of the language and the beauty of Melizah." It is obvious then that Rosenthal copied this sentence verbatim.²³ Similarly, Fünf writes of him: "a great scholar, and a wonderful author," and maintains that he was loved and honored by the great scholars of Berlin both Jewish and Christians.²⁴ Landau mentions Euchel's impact on and his efforts in Hebrew literature as noticeable.²⁵ Another historian of Hebrew literature, Waxman, refers to his "fine sense of language in his discrimination between shades of meaning in a number of Hebrew words and expressions."²⁶

While Ben-Zion Katz cites that "he knew what true poetry was,"²⁷ it was Kressel who came out with the observation that Euchel actually opened "a

²⁰ *Zikaron Basefer*, pp. 90-97; "Toldot Eichel," pp. 41-47.

²¹ GEIGER, *Geschichte*, s. 91.

²² MOSES MENDELSON (of Hamburg), *Pnei Tevel* [Face of the World] (Amsterdam, 1872), p. 252. Regarding the completion date of the manuscript of the book (1825) and this work in general, consult Samuel Werses, "The Book 'Pnei Tevel' in Its Connection to the Tradition of the Maqama in Our Literature," *Sefer Hayim Schirmann* (Jerusalem, 1970), p. 137 [Hebrew].

²³ L. ROSENTHAL, "Yode'a Sefer" [He Who Knows (the) Book, A Learned Person], supplement to M. ROEST'S *Catalog der Hebraica und Judaica* (Amsterdam, 1875 [facsimile edition: Amsterdam, 1966]), p. 440. The first review of the biography appears in *Hame'asef*, V (1789), p. 249.

²⁴ FÜNN, *Kneset Yisra'el*, p. 96.

²⁵ LANDAU, *Short Lectures on Modern Hebrew Literature*, p. 68.

²⁶ MEYER WAXMAN, *History of Jewish Literature*, III (New York, 1936), p. 128.

²⁷ BEN ZION KATZ, *Rabanut, Hasidut, Haskalah* [Rabbinat, Hasidism, Haskalah], (Tel

new epoch in the annals of Hebrew culture, literature and journalism." According to Kressel, "a whole epoch is named after him."²⁸ A similar appreciation could be found in the writing of Stern-Taeubler: "Isaac Euchel, the best Hebraist of that generation."²⁹

However, not all views of Euchel in this category are favourable. A negative evaluation of Euchel's style and literary art was expressed by Graetz. He writes: "his style was dry, without any imaginative power, and without any creative ability."³⁰ Kantor, who expressedly follows Graetz, states in his article on the writers of *Hame'asef* that Euchel wrote light and clear Hebrew, however, he was lacking a spirit of imagination and of a visionary creator.³¹ A more negative stand regarding Euchel's style is taken by Zinberg. Citing Ludwig Geiger adds that Euchel was the originator of prose that is euphuistic, an artificial prose which became a model for the rest of the *maskilim* of that generation. In his view, Euchel was lacking good taste, a sense of proportion and the knowledge of stylistic brevity.³² This preparatory overview of the general appreciation of Euchel's works, cursory as it is, should serve as an introduction to an examination of his various writings.

EUCHEL'S WRITINGS IN HAME'ASEF

What is the literary and ideological image of Isaac Euchel as reflected through his writings in *Hame'asef*? In order to avoid those articles and literary works of which Euchel's authorship is not ascertained, it is preferred to concentrate on works which bear Euchel's name, or else those which Euchel himself acknowledged his authorship of them, as I have found references and hints to them in his scattered writing. Thus the articles and other literary works whose authorship is questionable would not be discussed here. In addition, it seems to me that Euchel's general contribution to Hebrew literature and his endeavors in the various literary genres merit special attention, and a separate study is intended to be devoted to this subject. Likewise, the politics of *Hame'asef* under Euchel's editorship require another study.

In his view of Enlightenment Euchel does not differ from the other Hebrew *maskilim*; as a matter of fact he seems to represent the general line of his fellow

Aviv, 1956), p.251. Katz also portrays Euchel as being "one of the admirers of Mendelssohn, and his ideal was to follow in his [i.e. Mendelssohn's] footsteps," p. 248.

²⁸ KRESSEL, "Michtav Le'Itzik Eichel," p. 14. Kressel attaches great importance to Euchel's Hebrew activities, and sees in him and in his collaborators the ones who actually began the broadening of the Hebrew language. Cf. my study "The Attitude of the Early Maskilim toward the Hebrew Language," *Bulletin of the Institute of Jewish Studies*, II(1974), pp. 83-97.

²⁹ Selma STERN-TAEUBLER, "The First Generation of Emancipated Jews," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, XV, (1970), p. 34.

³⁰ Zvi GRAETZ, *Divrei Yemei Hayehudim* [History of the Jews], IX (Warsaw, [1904], p. 88.

³¹ J. L. KANTOR, "Dor Hame'asim" [The Generation of the *Me'asim*], *Sefer Hame'asef, Ha'asif* (Warsaw, 1887), p.3

³² ZINBERG, *Toldot Sifrut Yisra'el*, V., p.89.

enlighteners. Like Schnaber and Satanow, Euchel considers Hebrew as having advantages over the other languages.³³ However, he is very critical of the deterioration of the language as well as of the decline of creative works in Hebrew especially in poetry.³⁴ To him, language assumes a very vital significance in that it not only reflects the state of its people but indeed is tightly connected with the state and fate of the Jews whom he considered chained by the shackles of stupidity and ignorance.³⁵ He laments the passing out of the language of 'Ever, referred by him also as "our holy tongue," and contrasts this cultural and national deterioration with a *maskil's* model: the new times, "the period of knowledge that has arrived among the nations."³⁶ Both, the state of the Jews and the state of the other nations are the driving force behind his enlightenment activities. Euchel does not limit his activities merely to writing and lamentations, as could be seen from his Haskalah and social endeavors. Typically, in his travels Euchel is examining the general cultural, mental and social state of the Jews in every locale which he reached, and he is eager to observe whether his coreligionists have taken hold of wisdom.³⁷

While advocating the need of free investigation, *Ḥaqirah*, in the sciences as well as in philosophy, as did almost all of the Hebrew *maskilim* of the time (perhaps with the exclusion of Wessely), in their desire to open new horizons of Enlightenment to the Jews, Euchel maintains that religion does not curtail the in-born urge of *Ḥaqirah* which the creator had instilled in man. Indeed, a *maskil* like him should draw his support from religion itself; thus, according to Euchel, "the true religion commands us to probe into such matters." He concludes that both the Torah and logic instruct man to investigate and search.³⁸ As part of his enlightenment theory, Euchel advocates the study of

³³ "Naḥal Habsor," p. 12. See also Mordechai SCHNABER, *Tochahat Megilah* [A Rebuke of (on) the Megilah (Ecclesiastes)] (Hamburg, 1784), p. 8a; Isaac SATANOW, *Sefer Haḥizayon* [Book of Vision] (Berlin, [1775]), in the introduction; *idem*, *Igeret Bet Tfilah* [An Epistle on the House of Prayer] (Berlin, 1773), p. 4b; *idem*, *Sefer Hamidot* [Book of Ethics] (Berlin, 1784), p. 88a; Moses MENDELSSOHN, *Leshon Hazahav* [Language of Gold] (Berlin, [1783]), on the title page.

³⁴ "Naḥal Habsor," pp. 12–13; *Hame'asef*, I (1784), p. 92; Euchel expresses the view that Hebrew poetry ceased as a result of the *Galut* (apparently after *Psalms* 137:2).

³⁵ *Hame'asef*, I, p. 92.

³⁶ "Naḥal Habsor," pp. 12–13.

³⁷ "Iḡrot I. Eichel [to His Pupil]," *Hame'asef*, II (1785), p. 118. He broadens his observation also to include phenomena of ignorance among the non-Jews (*ibid.*, p. 139).

³⁸ "Davar 'El Haqore Mito'let Divrei Hayamin Haqadmonim" [A Word to the Reader Concerning the Benefit of Ancient History], *Hame'asef*, I (1784), pp. 10, 11. Although his name does not appear as author of this article, which opens a series of biographies in the journal, Euchel testifies of his authorship in his biography of Mendelssohn *Rabenu Heḥacham Moshe ben Menahem*, p. 13 (my pagination). Some of these views appear in his programmatic article in the introduction to volume IV (1788) of *Hame'asef*. The aforementioned article is signed ..ד. .ש. The identification of ..ד. .ש. with Euchel led to the wrong identification of all such abbreviations appearing in *Hame'asef* with this *maskil* or with his brother; see for example MARTINET, *Tiferet Yisra'el*, pp. 186, 349 (J. Euchel, his brother). In a separate article I discuss this subject and the identification of Euchel's articles in *Hame'asef*.

secular knowledge, and he praises Wessely for his enlightenment campaign.³⁹ Thus it appears that Euchel's Haskalah views are rather moderate; he seems to preach the golden rule between Enlightenment and Judaism. Being a *maskil*, he could see no contradiction between the two.

His religious stand is more complicated. Aside from his two major works, published in *Hame'asef*, which will be discussed separately, Euchel published a few articles displaying his religious views. In 1784, his views of the rabbis ostensibly are far from possessing hatred toward them, as Slouschz would have us believe.⁴⁰ In his advocacy of the study of secular knowledge, Euchel appears to be quite sympathetic toward the contemporary rabbis who are versed in the various fields of Judaic learnings yet declare openly their complete detachment from non-Judaic philosophical search and from secular studies. He comes out with high praise for their greatness and their clear mind, and he portrays himself as being an ardent student of them.⁴¹ His favorable views of the rabbis, it should be pointed out, appears in the second issue of the journal, as the editors' attempt of rapprochement with the traditional sectors could be noted. His tone of writing is at times apologetical.⁴² On the other hand, Euchel does not wish to appear as a compromiser, and he is coming out against those who pretend to possess both Jewish learning and secular sciences, yet have none. They are to be criticized - he says - for their nonsensical utterances. The editor of *Hame'asef* does have a target for his enlightenment arrows; however, it is not yet the rabbis, but some early form, not yet fully developed and characterized, of what was later to be known as the false *maskil*. A vivid description of his encounter with such a *maskil* is given by Euchel in his letters to his student published in *Hame'asef*.⁴³ A decade later, Euchel lashes at this figure in his Yiddish play. It should be noted that the *maskilim*, the first ones in Germany as well as the latter *maskilim* in Galicia and Russia, were always on the alert ready and eager to attack the false representatives of Haskalah.⁴⁴

Another category of enlighteners which turns to be a target for his attack is the one of "the haters of truth who spoke insolently in blasphemy of the fundamentals of faith such as the giving of Torah from heaven, the opening of

³⁹ "Davar 'El Haqore," pp. 25, 28.

⁴⁰ See note 13 above.

⁴¹ *Hame'asef*, I (1784), p. 27: "All my days I used to sit in the very dust at their feet."

⁴² *Ibid.*: "Do not believe, dear reader, that my intention here is to speak rebelliously against many of the greatest of our people."

⁴³ *Hame'asef*, II (1785), p. 140. A classification of the quasi-*maskilim* in three categories regarding their attitude toward the authentic Haskalah and its true exponents is being developed by Euchel in his introductory article to the fourth volume of *Hame'asef*, 1788.

⁴⁴ See for example the figure of the false *maskil* in M.D. BRANDSTÄDTER'S short story "Reshit Madon Ve'aharito" [The beginning of a Fight and Its End], *Hashahar*, II (1871), pp. 47-57, published also in *Kol Sipurei M.D. Brandstädter* [All the Stories of M.D.B.], I (Krakau, 1895 [facsimile edition: Tel Aviv, 1968]), pp. 25-40. Published recently in *Sipurim* [Stories] (Jerusalem, 1974).

the Red Sea, the coming down of the manna, and the like.”⁴⁵ As has been emphasized elsewhere, many of the Hebrew enlighteners of the first period of Haskalah did adopt some of the views expressed by the deistic writers. Euchel’s negative portrayal of German priests as being hypocritical is a token expression of this trend.⁴⁶ However, the *maskilim* rejected those deistic ideas which contradicted the fundamentals of Judaism such as the revelation and miracles.⁴⁷ The figure of Voltaire and his religious utterances, cited in this context by Euchel, do not represent a model of Enlightenment for the Hebrew *maskilim*.

It is not surprising then that Euchel embraces totally the Jewish tradition, *Qabalah* in his words, which refers to the body of inherited customs and beliefs. “Our inherited tradition is our faith,” he writes, “and we should not turn from it to the left or to the right.” Here is, however, some sign that his acceptance of the Jewish inherited tradition is that of a *maskil*. It is not a blind acceptance, for he is careful to point out that individual consideration and evaluation of personal thinking in matters of faith are advisable in order to avoid possible doubts, and in order “to know what to reply to a heretic.”⁴⁸ Argumentations like this one, as found in the Haskalah literature, are problematic, for they tend to be ambiguous and ambivalent. One can never know for sure where lies the borderline between a traditional argument, as found in the Jewish classical literature, and the tactical *maskilic* argument. The latter employs the former as a cover-up for its non-traditional goals. I think that in the context of this article, at this stage of Euchel’s work, the use of the argument is intended as a mark that even a moderate *maskil* has some reservations in his acceptance of Jewish heritage. What exactly is adopted and what is rejected could be observed only in his later writings. Here Euchel is reluctant to cite any of the doubts in order not to confuse “the students.”⁴⁹

Similarly, he manifests a very positive attitude toward the talmudic sages of yore.⁵⁰ This phenomenon of a Hebrew *maskil* coming out openly and clearly in praise of the ancient talmudic scholars is in no way unique to Euchel. Other Hebrew enlighteners have taken an identical stand, and in most cases, as in this instance, there is no reason to suspect the authenticity of such declarations. The accusation by historians and students of Haskalah that the Hebrew *maskilim* hated the Talmud, aside from being superficial is erroneous. The Hebrew *maskilim*, as different from the German-Jewish

⁴⁵ *Hame’asef*, I (1784), p. 27.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, II (1785), p. 139.

⁴⁷ See my study “The Impact of Deism on the Hebrew Literature of the Enlightenment in Germany,” *Journal of Jewish Studies*, XXIV (No. 2, Fall 1973), pp. 127–146.

⁴⁸ *Hame’asef*, I (1784), p. 26.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 28. Interestingly, Euchel says that they were full of knowledge thus highlighting his Haskalah criterion.

enlighteners, generally speaking did not attack the Talmud and its sages, but waged war against the *pilpulistic* way of studying the Talmud and the method of teaching the Talmud especially to children who were not ready for it. The Hebrew *maskilim* further rejected the latter rabbinic interpretation of the Talmud. They held this interpretation as a corruption of and a deviation from the original intention of the talmudic sages. The Hebrew enlighteners preached a return to the origin whenever it suited their goals.⁵¹

Some of Euchel's articles present us with views which may be classified as completely traditional in scope and tone. Expressions of a true believer are abundant in them. However, we cannot regard them as reflecting Euchel's true beliefs. For these are letters sent to his pupil Michael Friedländer, in the former's journey. As such, they were written with an educational, didactic goal in mind.⁵²

Of a different nature is Euchel's article published in *Hame'asef* in 1786, in which his stand regarding one of the issues of the Hebrew Enlightenment is publicly discussed. It is the issue of the *piyuṭim*, the liturgical poems, whose highly florid, at times non-grammatical language became a target for the *maskilim*.⁵³ Applying this stand of the Hebrew Haskalah toward the *piyuṭim*, Euchel published his translation of the prayerbook into German.⁵⁴ In it he allowed himself to be selective about his translation of the *piyuṭim*. As he puts it, he has translated only attributes regarding god which could be found in the Bible; however, those composed by late authors which had no textual foundation in the Bible were eliminated. Indeed the very act of translating the prayerbook was no exception in the Haskalah; even a moderate *maskil* such as Wessely praised openly a similar translation by Friedländer.⁵⁵ However, it was Euchel's decision in effect to edit the prayerbook according to his own specifications, thus to deviate from the traditional form of the prayerbook, which infuriated the more traditional elements of German Jewry.⁵⁶ It should

⁵¹ Consult my paper "Isaac Satanow's 'Mishlei 'Asaf' As Reflecting the Ideology of the German Hebrew Haskalah," *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte*, XXV (No. 3, 1973), pp. 225–242. A detailed discussion may be found in my study *Isaac Satanow: A Heretic and a Believer in the Beginning of Hebrew Haskalah Literature in Germany* (Beer Sheva, Israel, 1973), note 73 and the related text [mimeographed, Hebrew] scheduled for publication shortly.

⁵² "Igrat Isaac Eichel" [The Letters of Isaac Euchel], *Hame'asef*, II (1785), pp. 116–121, 137–142. Traditionalist expressions could be found in pp. 119, 120. One of the letters appears also in S.J. FÜNN, *Sofrei Yisra'el* [Writers of Israel] (Vilna, 1871), pp. 134–137. Another such writing based on an exegesis of some verses in Mishlei, a reproachful letter to his student who neglected the study of Torah and *Hochmah*, could be found in *Hame'asef*, IV (1788), pp. 65–71.

⁵³ Cf. my study "Intimations of Religious Reform in the German Hebrew Haskalah Literature," *Jewish Social Studies*, XXXII (No.1, January 1970), p.9.

⁵⁴ See note 4 above.

⁵⁵ *Hame'asef*, III (1786), pp. 129–130.

⁵⁶ Euchel himself reports of ferocious attacks against him, in his article "Davar 'El Hamedabrim" [A Word to the 'Medabrim'; cf. definition of 'Medabrim' in Isaac SATANOW's edition of *Moreh Nevuchim* [Guide for the Perplexed], III (Berlin, 1796), p. 77b], *Hame'asef* III (1786), p. 205.

be pointed out that the translation of the prayerbook into the vernacular and its editing enabled the reformers eventually to introduce changes in the synagogue orders and practices which became one of the issues in the first reform-temple controversy in 1818–1819.⁵⁷

Euchel is not apologetical about his changes, but indeed he is trying to prove that he was right in so doing.⁵⁸ He quotes his own words in the *Gebete*, in Hebrew translation, as follows: “And for this reason a wise Jewish person could not justify the *piyuṭim* which are said on the High Holy days, and how good and pleasant it is when a great man comes out to straighten the *piyuṭim* and to clear them of such sayings, for his reward is great.”⁵⁹ Even when he sounds apologetical, Euchel is far from seeking any pardon. He is ironic and highly critical of the rabbis who accept the *piyuṭim* without any change. “I did not come out in order to mock at the *piyuṭim*, god forbid,” he writes, “for who would open his mouth against such an Israelite custom? Who made me a ruler and a judge to speak on something that the congregations of Israel are accustomed to for generations while the rabbis and the sages of the generation watch without any protest. God forbid that I should dare to doubt the acts of my people.” Euchel does, of course, doubt the acts of his people, and he further puts his doubts into action. He considers his criticism and prayer reform as “*Qidush Hashem*” [Sanctifying of the name], and as defense of god’s honor.⁶⁰

His tactics are no different than the ones used by other *maskilim*: he is not to be credited, or blamed, for the originality of this attitude toward the *piyuṭim*, for he solicits a great authority in Judaism to lean on. It is, as in many other instances in the Haskalah literature, Maimonides. Euchel quotes highly critical passages from Maimonides regarding the stupidity of some liturgical pieces which border at times on sheer heresy.⁶¹

While the *maskilim* merely spoke against the *piyuṭim*, and preached the necessity of change, Euchel is among the first *maskilim*, if not the first one, to put his preaching into practice. Moreover, Euchel is advocating the institutionalization of this change within the framework of Judaism. Four years before Mendel Breslau’s public call to set up the legal and *halachic* mechanism for alleviation of the yoke of *mitzvot*,⁶² Euchel is advocating the

⁵⁷ Cf. my study “The Methodology Employed by the Hebrew Reformers in the First Reform Temple Controversy (1818–1819),” *Studies in Jewish Bibliography History and Literature in honor of I.E. Kiev* (New York, 1971), p. 381–397.

⁵⁸ He argues that the *piyuṭim* are incomprehensible (“Davar ‘El Hamedabrim,” p. 206), thus the essence of praying and its objective, namely, understanding of what is said — are missed (p. 208).

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 205.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 206–207.

⁶² *Hame’asef*, VI (1790), pp. 301–314. See the following article of mine on the subject: “The First Call of a Hebrew Maskil to Convene a Rabbinic Assembly for Religious Reforms,” *Tarbiz*, XLII (No. 3–4, 1973), pp. 484–491 [Hebrew; English summary, p. xiii].

same procedure on a smaller scale limited to the prayerbook. "It is worthwhile that we set wise and truly god-fearing people to watch over the prayers and their set-up," he writes.⁶³

When viewed against the background of the other contemporary calls for changes in Jewish life, such as the demand for reforming Jewish education by Wessely, and the changes in the *mitzvot* advocated by Breslau, Euchel's call is becoming more meaningful. It is part of an attempt by the *maskilim* to introduce certain changes into Jewish life in order to make Judaism, its faith and its customs more fitting to the modern times.

The high watermark of Euchel's criticism of the *piyutim* is an apparent slogan which crystallizes his attitude toward the religious authorities of Judaism. He writes: "But not everyone that grows a beard is a god-fearing person, and not everyone who leans over books is a lover of Torah."⁶⁴ No doubt it represents the subtle change that has been taking place in the policy of *Hame'asef* as set down by Euchel in *Naḥal Habsor* some three years before. Those scholars who believe that Mendelssohn was in effect the controlling power that did not let the *me'asfim* go to extremes may point out that these words were published after Mendelssohn's death. It is perhaps ironic that three pages thereafter the editors of the Hebrew journal, in their final message for the year, express their wish and prayer that they go in Mendelssohn's footsteps, and that they keep his lesson in accordance with the Torah and worship of the true religion.⁶⁵

THE BURIAL-OF-THE-DEAD CONTROVERSY

Concurrently, the editor of *Hame'asef* is involved, although anonymously, in another controversy of the Hebrew Haskalah, namely, the burial of the dead. The controversy, which started in 1772, was renewed by the *maskilim* some thirteen years later as part of their enlightenment campaign for changes which they felt should be introduced into Judaism.⁶⁶ Euchel published four Hebrew articles in *Hame'asef* in 1785–1786, without revealing his identity as author, under the pretense of articles contributed by an outsider. Following the second article, the journal started to publish the correspondence between

⁶³ "Davar 'El Hamedabrim," p. 208.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 209; " 'ach lo' kol megadel zaqan yere hashem, velo' kol rovez 'al sfarim 'ohev Torah." Another pungent expression refers to some negative traits which his teachers instilled in him, such as conceit and zeal, as "Trafim," idols.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 112. Regarding the attitude of the *maskilim* toward Mendelssohn see my book *Moshe Mendelssohn: Bechavlei Masoret* [Moses Mendelssohn: Bonds of Tradition] (Tel Aviv, 1972), pp. 84–114, and my study "The Image of Moses Mendelssohn as Reflected in the Early German Hebrew Haskalah Literature (*Hame'asef*, 1783–1797)," *Proceedings of Fifth World Congress of Jewish Studies*, III (Jerusalem, 1973), pp. 269–282 [Hebrew]. Also see my article "An Epigram on Moses Mendelssohn: Its Background and Its Author," *Bitzaron*, LXIII (No. 4, 1972), pp. 184–188 [Hebrew].

⁶⁶ *Moshe Mendelssohn: Bechavlei Masoret*, pp. 48–52; "Intimations of Religious Reform in the German Hebrew Haskalah Literature," p. 8, notes 30–31.

Mendelssohn and rabbi Emden on the subject, thus reviving the old, 1772 controversy.⁶⁷ Only in the last issue of the journal in its seven-volume series, in 1797, did Euchel reveal his authorship of the said articles in an essay published in German with Hebrew characters.⁶⁸ These articles give us some insight of Euchel's religious stand. More interesting than his views, which are rather expected, are his argumentations. Indeed, Euchel preaches the stand of the Haskalah, namely, that the dead should not be buried immediately in accordance with the existing Jewish custom, but should be put in an appropriate place for three days before the final interment takes place so as to avoid any chance of a premature burial. This *maskil's* awareness of the non-Jews' apparent watching eye, so to speak, is noted at the outset. Their views are adopted as a criterion of truth, or as a model to be emulated. It is ironic — but typical of the *maskilim* — that the justification for changing the traditional Jewish custom is being given the title of “'Et la'asot la'adonai” [it is high time for change for the sake of god].⁶⁹ The starting point of his argument is the following statement: “Jewish burial nowadays is not the same as in the old days.”⁷⁰ This statement is highly significant for it depicts the tactics of the *maskilim* in their Haskalah campaign, and it reveals the essence and nature of their argumentation. This supposition, needless to say, is in effect the crux of the controversy which is yet to be proven. Thus Euchel makes it quite easy for himself as he sets the groundwork in a way that leads easily to his desired conclusion. If indeed the latter-day rabbis deviated from the talmudic custom of burial, the *maskilim's* demand — as they see it — should be considered not as reform but as restoration of the original talmudic custom.⁷¹ Those students of Hebrew history and letters who expressed their amazement at the special attention and effort which the *maskilim* put in the burial controversy may have missed the great vitality which the issue has had, and its symbolic value for the enlighteners.⁷² Aside from the desire to appear

⁶⁷ “She'elah 'El Hachmei Yisra'el Verashehem” [A Question to the Sages of Israel and Their (Its) Leaders], *Hame'asef*, II (1785), pp. 87–90; “Divrei Ha'ish Hasho'el 'Al Dvar Minhag Halanat Hametim” [The Words of the Man Inquiring About the Custom of Delayed Burial of the Dead], *ibid.*, pp. 152–154; *ibid.*, III (1786), pp. 183–192, 202–205. The introduction by the editors to the correspondence between Mendelssohn and Emden appears in vol. II, p. 154. The close proximity of that introductory notice to Euchel's article, and the revelation in his German article on the subject (see note 68) that he was instrumental in getting the correspondence from Mendelssohn lead one to the conclusion that these articles were “planted” by Euchel with the intention to revive the controversy in public.

⁶⁸ “Ist nach dem juedischen Gesetze Uebernachten der Todten wirklich verboten,” *Hame'asef*, VII (1797), ss. 361–391.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, II (1785), p. 88. Based on *Psalms* 119:126 “'Et la'asot le-YHVH heferu toratecha” [Should it be necessary — for the sake of preserving the Jewish religion — even biblical laws may be temporarily changed]; cf. *Gitin*, 60a.

⁷⁰ *Hame'asef*, II (1785), p. 88.

⁷¹ Typically, Euchel asks: “And why did the latter sages who came after them [= after the talmudic rabbis] change the custom, and why do they hurry to bury the dead in the ground?” (*ibid.*, p. 89).

⁷² ZINBERG, *Toldot Sifrut Yisra'el*, V., p. 61: “It is paradoxical that the question of the burial of the dead has turned to be a question of life [and death].”

humane in the eyes of the non-Jews, the *maskilim* raised an issue in which they felt they had the upper hand over the rabbis; in it they could argue with the rabbis on their own terms, using the *Halachah*, as they often did, to argue the *maskilim's* own cause; in it they could argue that the contemporary religious authorities had been mistaken, and that changes — referred to as restoration of old customs — must be made; in it the *maskilim* found an issue in which they believed very strongly that they were right; in addition, they felt that they had a strong supporter in the great Haskalah figure of Moses Mendelssohn to lean on. Thus Euchel should be considered not only as an exponent of Enlightenment issues but as the manipulating agent behind the scenes in matters which had immediate and practical bearing.

While glorifying the wisdom and knowledge of the talmudic sages,⁷³ Euchel underlines the implications resulting from the fact of the deviation of the late rabbis from the formers' tradition. His contemporary rabbis — he writes — lack the tradition which has been given from one generation to another.⁷⁴ Thus Euchel is trying to destroy the religious authority of contemporary rabbis, and in consequence to weaken their right as sole carrier of tradition, and as the only interpreters of the Jewish law. It appears that the rabbis are lacking a vital element which the Enlightenment has adopted as its most significant criterion for the discovery of truth, namely, human reason. If the contemporary rabbis should apply common-sense, Euchel writes, they should see for themselves that the early rabbis had already established the burial procedure as advocated now by the enlighteners. These contemporary rabbis could have relied then on the talmudic sages in changing the mistaken custom of the fast burial of the dead. Euchel further lashes at those who would not consent to deviate one iota from “*minhag 'avotehem*” [the custom of their fathers] even if these customs are superstitious. Included among those who possess this wrong attitude are the masses who regard “*minhag 'avotehem*” as the customs of their parents and grandparents, as well as the learned ones who are versed in the sources yet adhere to “stupid customs” as practiced by their fathers.⁷⁵

Apparently, Euchel expected some reply from the traditionalist rabbis, as did Wessely before him, in the *Divrei Shalom Ve'emet* controversy, and as did Breslau in 1790. His disappointment, naive as it may look, is quite bitter. Shrewdly, Euchel refers to their silence in the face of his writings, using the phrase “*Hayiti kedoresh 'el hametim*” [it was as though I was appealing to the dead], which in the context of the controversy has a dual meaning.⁷⁶ To him, it is “a light and small custom” about which the rabbis prefer not to enact any

⁷³ *Hame'asef*, II (1785), p. 152: “for they were learned in the Torah as well as in *Hochmah*.”

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, “*Sar me'itam haqabalah 'ish mipi 'ish.*”

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 152-153.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, III (1786), p. 183.

changes lest the fence — the legal protection device put around the more vital religious laws — be destroyed.⁷⁷ Needless to say that Euchel does not consider changing “our fathers’ custom with the custom of our fathers’ fathers,” namely, returning to the original custom, any destruction of that legal fence.⁷⁸ Since the traditionalist rabbis did not give him the opportunity to refute their claims, as they remained silent, Euchel did the refutation on his own. He cites some ten arguments by rabbi Yehezkel Landau of Prague, refuting nine of them, and subsequently he refutes also Emden’s position. The refutations highlight Euchel’s inclination to rely on the original talmudic text, as he interprets it, and on human reason. He further endeavors to establish another criterion of authority as different from the rabbis, regarding this custom; “we do not learn from him [Emden] in matters dependent on the knowledge of natural science,” he writes.⁷⁹ Not only does Euchel refuse to accept the authority of the rabbis anymore in religious matters bordering with the sciences, but he offers the Haskalah’s new authority in such matters, namely, Dr. Marcus Herz.⁸⁰ As he was instrumental in arousing the controversy in the first place,⁸¹ and active in its development,⁸² so was he the main agent in the contacts with Marcus Herz. Euchel obtained information from him pertaining to premature burials that occurred,⁸³ requested openly his professional advice,⁸⁴ and published it in the German edition of the journal in 1788.⁸⁵ He later translated Herz’s German reply into Hebrew, and published it as a separate pamphlet.⁸⁶ Euchel’s stand in this religious dispute is quite extreme. Obviously, he is the driving force behind the reappearance of the issue, and in 1792 he is one of the founders of the society which puts this Haskalah preaching into practice.

(to be continued)

Cornell University, Ithaca, N. Y.

MOSHE PELLI

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 190.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 192.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 191.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 203.

⁸¹ Euchel first published an article on the subject in the German supplement of *Hame'asef* as early as 1784. See “Auszug eines Briefes, von einem Juden an seinen Freund einen Christen,” *Erste Zugabe zu der hebraischen Monatsschrift (המאסף) dem Sammler* (January 1784), ss. 15–18. Euchel refers to his previous German writings in his first Hebrew article on the subject (*Hame'asef*, II [1785], pp. 87–88). See also his article in German-Jewish, *Hame'asef*, VII (1797), ss. 374–376.

⁸² He relates how he went to Berlin to get the Emden correspondence from Mendelssohn (*Hame'asef*, VII [1797], s. 378).

⁸³ *Hame'asef*, II (1785), p. 153. Moshe SAMET, in his unpublished dissertation, identifies one of the doctors referred to by Euchel as Hirschberg from Königsberg (*Halacha and Reform*, submitted 22.3.67. Hebrew University in Jerusalem, p. 95 [Hebrew]).

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, III (1786), pp. 303–304.

⁸⁵ Marcus HERZ, *An die Herausgeber des hebraeischen Sammlers ueber die fruehe Beerdigung der Juden* (Berlin, 1787).

⁸⁶ *Idem*, *Michtav* [...] *El Mehabrei Hame'asef* [A Letter to the Authors of *Hame'asef*] (Berlin, 1789). Euchel identifies himself as translator in his article in *Hame'asef*, VII (1797), ss. 379–380. FRIEDBERG, in *Bet 'Eqed Sfarim*, p. 602, erroneously cites Joel Brill as the translator.

*Isaac Euchel: Tradition and Change in the First Generation of Haskalah Literature in Germany (II)**

MOSHE PELLI

CORNELL UNIVERSITY, ITHACA, N.Y.

BIOGRAPHY OF MENDELSSOHN

Two major works of Euchel, published in *Hame'asef*, reveal two different faces of Euchel. The first one is his biography of Moses Mendelssohn, published in *Hame'asef* in 1788, and later issued separately in a book form. The second work is Euchel's "'Igrot Meshulam ben 'Uriyah Ha'eshtemo'i", published in 1790.

The biography of Mendelssohn in many respects could be considered as a spiritual autobiography by Euchel himself, indeed as an authentic reflection of it. There is no doubt that a great deal of Euchel's inclinations with regard to Enlightenment and Haskalah could be found in this biography. However, a word of caution is in place. For the biographical writer is bound by his subject matter and by a guiding concept which he has of the personality he is endeavouring to portray. These limitations notwithstanding, we may nevertheless gain insight into Euchel's world-view, Enlightenment stand and mentality. It is clear that Euchel considers Mendelssohn to be the symbol of Hebrew and Jewish Enlightenment, the highest of its achievements, and the model to be followed by the *maskilim*. His tone of writing is that of enthusiasm enveloped with a great sense of mission. Euchel, it appears, has a goal: to teach and educate his fellow enlighteners to follow in the footsteps of Mendelssohn.⁸⁷ His emphasis on certain aspects of Mendelssohn's activities indeed sheds light on Euchel's own Haskalah values. It is noted that Euchel distinguishes between Mendelssohn's contributions within the Jewish spheres and outside of them. He lays the emphasis on Mendelssohn's efforts to "bring back the young people of Israel to the place of Torah," referring to the translation of the five books of Moses into German and to the *Be'ur*, the exegesis.⁸⁸ It is significant to note that Euchel is giving Mendelssohn's Jewish contributions a traditional colouring. He further portrays Mendelssohn as being instrumental in correcting two deficiencies among the German Jews of his time, both in the field of language. He enabled them to master the correct German language in place of Yiddish, and to adopt the proper use of their own

*For the first part of this study, see *JJS* XXVI (1975), pp. 151-167.

⁸⁷ Euchel, *Rabenu Hehacham Moshe ben Menahem*, pp. 9, 113.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

language, Hebrew.⁸⁹ By eliminating the language barrier — Euchel writes — Mendelssohn brought the Jews closer to the study of natural and practical sciences, and drove them to adopt practical and useful professions, and to artistic creativity.⁹⁰ In addition, he opened before them the new avenues into their own culture and heritage through the proper study of the Torah. Apparently, it is important for Euchel to picture Mendelssohn as enriching tradition with the new elements of Enlightenment, as complementing the old with the new into some form of a moderate Haskalah.

Mendelssohn's second sphere of achievement is outside of Judaism, in Euchel's words, "his glory among the nations."⁹¹ In his cultural, philosophical and literary activities, Mendelssohn has proven to the non-Jewish world that he could compete successfully with its pundits, yet at the same time he could remain a full-fledged Jew. Thus Mendelssohn, as portrayed by Euchel, becomes a two-fold symbol, both to the non-Jewish world as well as to the Jews themselves.⁹²

Mendelssohn's biography is undoubtedly a very effective vehicle for the introduction of Euchel's Enlightenment views. Euchel is quite subtle in elaborating on his themes. He does it on three planes, the common denominator of which is the figure of Moses Mendelssohn, the enlightener. *par excellence*. In addition to Mendelssohn's contribution, as stated above, Euchel depicts Mendelssohn's formal education, and more often his informal education, around these themes. Euchel is sketching this prototype of Haskalah as being aware at a very early stage of his mental development of the great significance of the Hebrew Enlightenment issues. Thus, before the age of ten, Mendelssohn was cognizant of the necessity of mastering Hebrew grammar, that focal point of Hebrew Haskalah. Similarly, at an early age Mendelssohn found out that it was impossible to understand the legal teaching of the late rabbis without the examination and mastery of the teachings of the early sages and the fundamental Scriptures of Judaism. For this reason he made it his business to study diligently the books of the Bible.⁹³ In the same vein he illustrates young Mendelssohn, at fourteen, studying "*Hochmah*," wisdom, philosophy and secular studies,⁹⁴ and subsequently studying ancient languages as well as modern ones. For, as Euchel puts it, "the knowledge of languages is the foundation of all wisdom, and wisdom is the foundation of the Torah." Following this, Mendelssohn studied secular sciences such as geometry and algebra, natural sciences, history, and philosophy.⁹⁵

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 121–122.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 10–12.

Although this intellectual portrait of Mendelssohn may be close to reality, Euchel's selective hand and guiding concepts are indeed noticeable. Euchel is careful to select those conflicts and issues between the Haskalah and traditional rabbis, showing Mendelssohn's natural preferences, so to speak, which are identified with those of Haskalah. It should be remembered that the *maskilim* advocated the study of Hebrew grammar in the face of the general tendency of the Jewish teachers and rabbis to ignore this discipline. Likewise, the the *maskilim* attached great value to the return to the study of the Bible, to which some rabbis have applied the talmudic sentence "min'u bnechem min hahigayon" [Prevent your children from (the study of) *Higayon*, namely, logic]. This saying had been interpreted to mean avoidance of the study of the Bible: "Lo' targilum bamiqra yoter midai" [Do not accustom them to an excessive study of the Bible]. Of course, the *maskilim* objected to this interpretation of rabbi Eliezer's saying by Rashi as expounded by the contemporary rabbis.⁹⁶ The foreign languages issue and the study of secular disciplines were also part and parcel of the Haskalah banner, opposed by some traditional rabbis.

One notices a certain tension in the portrayal of Mendelssohn. On the one hand Euchel is depicting him as having the same formal education as everyone else, thus being the Everyman of the Jewish intelligentsia of that time.⁹⁷ On the other hand, there is an attempt to picture Mendelssohn as being somehow unique.⁹⁸ He was a *maskil* from birth, so to speak, who overcame the common difficulties confronting young Jewish children, and elevated himself to become one in his generation. Although he was unique, his road to Haskalah typifies the process of Enlightenment which the other *maskilim*, too, have gone through. The great influence of Maimonides, for example, is cited as being one of the factors in shaping Mendelssohn's inclination toward Haskalah, and as the factor behind the turning of all the other "wise people of the generation" toward Enlightenment.⁹⁹ Euchel also dwells on Mendelssohn's creative talents (with some limitations and an expression of his own self-criticism) — writing Hebrew poetry at an early age.¹⁰⁰ In Euchel's pen, Mendelssohn is becoming the symbol of the successful *maskil* and the success of Haskalah as well as the epitome of its ideal, its desires and its goals.

⁹⁶ I discuss this subject and cite some sources in my paper "Mordechai Gumpel Schnaber: The First Religious Reform Theoretician of the Hebrew Haskalah in Germany," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 64 (1974), pp. 289-313 (cf. note 78); (mimeographed working-paper appeared in Beer Sheva, 1972). The origin is in *Brachot* 28b. Cf. Rabbi Yehezkel Landau, *Zlah* [. . .] 'Al Masechet *Brachot* (Piotrkow, 1883) p. 56 [Hebrew].

⁹⁷ He writes: "Moses was brought to school, and he studied there like all the boys of our people" (*Rabenu Hehacham Moshe ben Menahem*, p. 6).

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, "However, not like all the boys was Moses."

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 7. A discussion on the impact of Maimonides on Haskalah could be found in my paper on Schnaber (cited above in note 96), note 5.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 6. This characterization is typical of the portrayal of a *maskil* in the latter writings of Hebrew fiction in Mapu's work, for example.

The third plane of Euchel's subtle advocacy of Haskalah while assembling the mosaic of Mendelssohn's personality and portraying his unique phenomenon is more open and straight-forward as he comes out overtly in favour of Haskalah, and attacks the teachers and rabbis of the old school. The old type of education is severely criticized, and the spiritual leaders are blamed directly for the state of Jewish education and, as a result, for the low ebb of the Jews.¹⁰¹ Accordingly, the enlightener who preached openly the change of the old order in Jewish education, Naphtali Herz Wessely, is being defended by Euchel.¹⁰² All the elements cited as the achievements of Mendelssohn and as typifying his informal education, as part of Mendelssohn's legitimate biography, are being put in focus in a direct preaching of Enlightenment in the specific areas of the acquisition of foreign languages and secular studies. In summary, it is a complete change of the order of Jewish education. Thus we note Euchel's triple treatment of Haskalah issues which were close to his heart in his biography of the person who was regarded as "the light [or candle] of our generation."¹⁰³ It is imperative to point out that Euchel's preaching of Enlightenment is rather mild. He preaches no religious reform, at any rate no greater religious reforms than advocated by the moderate *maskil* Wessely in his *Divrei Shalom Ve'emet*. The image of Mendelssohn which he illustrates combines Haskalah with tradition. In spite of Mendelssohn's achievements in his enlightenment, and in spite of his active participation in German culture — Euchel is emphasizing eagerly — "he did not sidestep even one step away from the religion of his forefathers."¹⁰⁴ It is for this reason that there is no mention at all in this biography of the burial-of-the-dead controversy and of Mendelssohn's dispute with rabbi Emden. Likewise, the religious tone of Euchel's writing here, his prayers and exclamations to god,¹⁰⁵ reflect Euchel's guiding concept of Mendelssohn as being a neo-religious leader of his people. It manifests Euchel's strong belief that Judaism and European Enlightenment do not necessarily contradict one another if given in the hands of the *maskilim*. Euchel does not suspect any duality in his views. His moderate Haskalah, it appears, does take into account certain changes in Jewish customs as preached by the other Hebrew *maskilim*, and as incorporated thematically in Euchel's fictional writing in *Hame'asef*.

'IGROT MESHULAM BEN 'URIYAH HA'ESHTEMO'I

Euchel's second major work which was published in *Hame'asef* is a work of fiction. It is one of the first such works in modern Hebrew literature — if one is

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 6, 12, 28, 34.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 34.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, on the title page.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 11, 14.

to disregard for the moment poetry, fables and some attempts of fictional prose — which endeavours to express the view-point of Hebrew Haskalah in modern literary ways: through the characterization of the main figure, dialogue, and through the epistolary techniques which have been in vogue in European literature. Thus we do not face Euchel's own enunciations in this composition, but we encounter a number of views, expressed by different figures among whom the author's voice has to be found. Naturally, the use of the epistolary form lends itself to a number of view-points and a number of angles. Euchel is using the epistolary form very effectively. It is a work of satire patterned after the epistolary genre and Montesquieu's *Persian Letters*.

The story is as follows: Meshulam, an eighteen-year old youth, is sent in 1769 by his father, Uriyah Ha'eshtemo'i, from Syria to Europe to learn "the customs of the people of these states and their disposition."¹⁰⁶ On the boat Meshulam meets a marrano Jew, who accompanies him in his visit and serves as his guide in Spain. There Meshulam is acquainted with the special way in which the marranos observe Judaism, and with the Christian worship as well. Meanwhile he receives two letters, from his grandfather and from his father, both advising him of the manner in which he should conduct himself as a Jew while away from them. He further visits Italy and is impressed by the freedom, enlightenment and by the social order in that country. He discusses Italian poetry, as translated by Ephraim Luzzatto, and compares its poetic art to that which he is accustomed to. Interspersed with Meshulam's description of his visits are his comments on social, cultural, religious, and historical phenomena and facts, as well as his questions regarding Jewish heritage, customs, and religious observance.

Meshulam represents the figure of the Jewish *maskil* as a young, searching man; he searches for himself and for his own spiritual and social identity, and finds it by way of contrasting his culture with that of enlightened Europe. Euchel characterizes him from the outset, even before reaching Europe, as a "*maskil*" who is blessed with a clear mind.¹⁰⁷ His disposition is characterized outwardly, too, as that of a *maskil*; he is good looking, good hearted, and is well liked by his acquaintances. This outward description as characteristic of his inner qualities is typical of Haskalah writers in general. Further, his education was that of a *maskil*; as could be expected, it is similar to the description of Mendelssohn in Euchel's biography: "He knows the language of his people and the languages of other peoples." His father taught him "wisdom and knowledge, poetry, music and logic, astronomy and measures,

¹⁰⁶ "'Igrot Meshulam ben 'Uriyah Ha'eshtemo'i," *Hame'asef*, VI (1790), p. 39. In a separate article I attempt to show the close relationship between this epistolary writing and Euchel's previously published letters to his pupil, "'Igrot Eichel," thus proving textually his authorship of "'Igrot Meshulam."

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

and all the qualities of a man who is to face great people”¹⁰⁸ Typically, Meshulam as an enlightener is also a man of faith.¹⁰⁹ In the same vein is the portrayal of the marrano Jew: “A very clever man, who knows wisdom and language[s], and his heart is purified with the fear of god; he has good qualities, his manners are magestic, and he is highly respected in the eyes of the people.”¹¹⁰ Both descriptions are highly positive, and are portrayed as such in order to enhance Euchel’s depiction of the young man as searching for the truth, and the marrano Jew as possessing it; the two apparently are models to be emulated. It is clear that Euchel identifies with Meshulam and his search, which in effect was the search of Hebrew Haskalah for the golden rule between Judaism and European culture.

Although Euchel identifies with Meshulam, he does not put in his mouth clear-cut, direct answers. Meshulam indeed has many questions and doubts which he expresses overtly to his friend in the letters he sent back home. However, it is only a literary device which was intended to create authenticity and reliability in a way that forces the reader, who is faced with the same questions asked in second person as if directed at him, to reach his own conclusions, his own answers. Guidelines are given by the author through the development of the plot, through the formulation of the various world-views as presented in the letters, and through the author’s literary stand.

While away from home and independent of the authority of the two generations represented by his grandfather and his father, having the perspective of time and place, and searching for his own path, Meshulam receives two letters. These two letters represent and present two world-views in Judaism, that of his grandfather and that of his father. The grandfather’s letter looks like a spiritual will,¹¹¹ a last message of traditional Judaism to the younger generation. The letter is structured quite cunningly so that the author’s satirical intention could be recognized, yet should not be too obvious. Grandfather’s suggestions are arranged in a meaningful order: they are wrapped in the beginning and end with advices which are generally accepted, and are quite common and self-explanatory. It is as though the structure is patterned after that well-known rabbinic saying on the book of *Qohelet* whose beginning and end are saturated with the notion of the fear of heaven, not so much its inner core. Thus we have three introductory suggestions by the grandfather to Meshulam: fear of god, prayer, and study of sacred texts. Thereafter comes a transition in the advice to be very careful

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, “and he feared god very much all his days.”

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 46. “You are going faraway and I am old; who knows whether you would see me alive; therefore, listen my son to whatever I shall advise you, and may god be with you all the days of your life.”

about washing of the hands before meals. And subsequently instructions of lesser importance, which are highlighted here for satirical reasons: not to look at the beauty of a city, its buildings, and gardens; to learn the Talmud alone from the wise; to love Torah scholars and to hate the ignoramus; to observe the Sabbath without speaking on it any unimportant conversation, or idle talk; to fast at least twice a month. The following last two suggestions are again of a general nature which are commonly accepted: giving charity, and being wholesome with God.¹¹²

In addition, Euchel's satirical intention is noticeable from the structure of each individual suggestion mostly within the core of secondary advices. The demand by itself, although somewhat trivial, may yet be accepted by a religious person. Following the demand, there comes an explanation which tends to be disharmonious, exaggerated, twisted, and in general out of context. Subsequently, there is at times the documentation, which is also twisted and exaggerated so as to become antagonistic. Thus it becomes rather a hostile documentation. This technique is later used by such Hebrew satirists as Saul Berlin, Joseph Perl and Isaac Erter.¹¹³ For example — advice: to be careful about *Neḥilat Yadayim* [washing of the hands]; explanations: "for he who eats bread without washing his hands is likened to one who sleeps with a prostitute;" documentation: "For it is said: 'For by means of a harlot woman a man is brought to a piece of bread'" (*Proverbs*, 6:26). The documentation has nothing to do with the advice except via his own explanation, yet the explanation itself is rather far-fetched. Thus a sacred text is being applied to a low situation, and the contrast is becoming humorous and ironic. Similarly, observance of Sabbath without any idle talk while studying Mishnah and *Shir Hashirim* is being given the explanation: "So that you should escape several bad afflictions." Subsequently, the grandfather is citing several verses from *Shir Hashirim* applying them to *halakhic* contexts in a nonsensical fashion of which he says that there are some great secrets in them . . .¹¹⁴ The explanation as well as the documentation are instrumental in destroying the very advice given by the grandfather.

His father's letter contains ideas which in essence contradict everything expressed previously by the grandfather. Meshulam's grandfather emphasizes

¹¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 46–47.

¹¹³ See [Saul Berlin], *Ktav Yosher* [An Epistle of Righteousness] ([Berlin, 1794]); [Joseph Perl], *Megaleh Tmirin* [Revealer of Secrets] (Wien, 1819); Isaac Erter, "Gilgul Nefesh" [Transmigration of a Soul], *Hazofeh Levat Yisra'el* [A Watcher for the House of Israel] (Wien, 1858), pp. 31–48 [pages are misnumbered]. For Erter's use of the notes see my paper "Darchei Hasipur Shel Erter Basatirah 'Gilgul Nefesh'" [Narrative Techniques of Isaac Erter's Satire 'Gilgul Nefesh'], read at the Sixth World Congress for Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, 1973, note 18. *CF.* Samuel Werses' article "Joseph Perl's Satiric Methods," *Sipur Veshorsho* [Story and Source] (Ramat Gan, 1971), pp. 21–26.

¹¹⁴ "Igrat Meshulam," pp. 46–47.

the religious deed whereas his father put the emphasis on *Kavanah*, intention. The latter stresses the use of common sense, investigation and experience, emphasizes love of everyone, tolerance of ideas, understanding, and appropriate behavior, believes in happiness that should be achieved in this world, and states that charity should be given to all.¹¹⁵ These ideas, highlighting traditionalism combined with moderate *Haskalah*, are contrasted with the extreme, at times absurd, religious and social stand as expressed by the old generation. Euchel's inclination toward the father is noted from the difference in tone of the two letters. Grandfather's letter, as elaborated above, contains satiric and ironic uses which are intended to achieve the very opposite of what is written in it. Whereas the father's letter is straight forward, convincing, serious, almost self-evident.

This ideological clash between the two generations vying, as it were, over the loyalty of the young generation, has a preparatory stage in the plot of the story, which assists the reader in deciphering the author's stand as well as that of the main figure, namely, Meshulam. Before leaving his home, Meshulam was instructed by his father as follows: "[. . .] he has commanded me to change my clothes and to exchange the clothes of the eastern countries with the clothes of the European people before leaving my home, saying it is appropriate for a person going in the land to search for and to know wisdom, to remove from himself every sign which points out at first sight that he is a foreigner, and he should disguise in the clothes and the manners of the people amongst whom he dwells, so that [they] would consider him a member of the land of their birth, and so that they would not hide from him their [social] customs and opinions, and thus he will achieve his desires to learn other opinions [views] and customs."¹¹⁶

Grandfather opposes these instructions, seeing in them "an opening, or breaking, of a fence," a term usually referring to secondary *halakhic* regulations intended to protect the essence of Judaism. His explanation: "For it is forbidden for an Israelite to change his fathers' customs and to deviate from them [=it] as much as a hairbreadth." Meshulam expresses his view of grandfather's stand: "Although there is no reason in his words, he was insistent." Thus Meshulam takes sides as he rejects the views of the old generation. Not only does he reject them, but he actively adopts the views of

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 47–50. He writes: "I did not let you do even a small thing without observation and testing in as much as we can comprehend [. . .]. I have learned that it is better [to do, or observe] little but with *Kavanah* [intention] than a lot without intention [. . .]. For this reason I have instructed you always, my son, that in the worship of god you should come down to the *Kavanah*, which is the soul, whereas the deed is just like a stringency [p. 48]. You should not be contemptful toward any man whoever he should be, for one creator had created you [. . .]. All my days I have been sorrowful whenever I saw a man angered because of the thoughts of his fellow man for being different than his own thoughts [. . .]" (p. 49).

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

the middle generation, as expressed by his father. He puts on European clothes; however, in order not to anger his grandfather and in order to show respect for him, he does it after a while. The adoption of this stand by Meshulam is both practical and ideological. For in addition to the actual change of clothes Meshulam expounds on his ideological reasoning saying that "this custom [wearing eastern clothes] does not fall under the laws of god, and it changes occasionally in the changing time and place."¹¹⁷ The author, too, takes sides in the issue, supporting the father's stand by introducing a footnote to the latter's instructions, documenting them with an authoritative saying from the Talmud: "Should you arrive at a city, adopt its custom."¹¹⁸ The choice of the father's stand by his son is being justified intensively again in the plot as the change of clothes is proven to have saved Meshulam's life. The young man further advises his correspondent back home of this justification, concluding that his friend should tell all young people there to act accordingly.¹¹⁹ There is no doubt where the author's sympathy lies. Of significance is another angle of the author's siding with the father, which one is aware of upon checking Euchel's sources. There is ample proof that Euchel bases the intellectual core of his story on the ideological foundations as found in the writings of Moses Mendelssohn. The central theme in "'Igrof Meshulam," of adopting the customs of one's dwelling place, is already found in Mendelssohn's *Jerusalem*. While expressing the stand of Uriyah, the father, most probably Euchel had in mind his own translation of *Jerusalem* as incorporated into his biography of Mendelssohn: "[. . .] You shall not forsake the customs of the state in which you came to dwell. Indeed you should not forsake the Torah of your fathers, and you should not stop holding the religion of your elders."¹²⁰ Uriyah's image is thus being intensified and is becoming dimensional and more meaningful as it assumes some resemblance to Moses Mendelssohn.

As an interim summary, I believe it may be concluded that Euchel is indeed preaching for some changes. If we are to interpret the language of his fiction into his supposed message, we may say that Euchel so far advocates changes in those things which stand in his way to acquire the European wisdom, namely, those external things which alienate the Jew from his immediate environment. He is preaching and advocating the immediate change in customs which are in no way part of the divine laws and religious deeds of Judaism, changes in those customs which are given to the dictates of time and place. In this interim summary, I disagree with those who interpreted Euchel's intention in "'Igrof

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 40–41.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 40: "Alt leqarta halech benimusah."

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 41, 43.

¹²⁰ *Rabenu Hehacham*, p. 94. In addition, the father is portrayed as a model to be emulated ("'Igrof Meshulam," p. 83).

Meshulam” as being very extreme.¹²¹ I think that the interpretation of Euchel must take into account the literary structure of the story and the author’s literary devices, and may not reach conclusions which are not examined and checked against their literary context.

This is not to say that Euchel does not have any extreme comments regarding the inner core of Judaism; however, they remain comments and do not reach the practical stage of changes. They are given in the form of vital questions, of terrible doubts expressed by Meshulam in a tantalizing way.

This young *maskil* in the story encounters two phenomena in his search for religious truth. The one is quasi-Jewish, the marranos and their peculiar way of observing their Jewish religion. The second phenomenon is Christian-European, in the spheres of religion and society. Meshulam describes the marranos’ worship which is a far cry from that of traditional Judaism. They observe the holidays, however “most of them do not observe the *mitzvo*t at all, saying that they [*mitzvo*t] had not been given except to tie together the association [of Jews], when the nation of Israel is in the open, and there is no one objecting to their worship. However, when they are among their enemies, and while there is fear all around, the tie has been loose, and they have enough with the worship which is in the heart, for this is the principal way [of worship].”¹²² Meshulam’s reflections and doubts in the face of this Jewish phenomenon are eye-opening. Right after this description he continues to write to his friend: “I did not know whether these things were truthful [correct], for according to my thinking the success [happiness] of the Israelite is in the observance of the *mitzvo*t alone, and if it is possible to be wholesome and happy without the observance of the *mitzvo*t would it not be that Socrates the Greek and Zoroaster the Hindu would be as wholesome and happy as any Israelite? — Let me know, my brother, your view in this probe.”¹²³

The question of all questions of Hebrew Haskalah is thus being asked: Is it possible for a Jew to be happy and wholesome without the observance of the

¹²¹ Barzilay, in his article cited above in note 18. See Sha’an’an’s views in the text above and in the related notes 16–17, and Mahler’s views near note 19. In the views expressed by grandfather, Mahler sees Euchel’s direct attack on the Talmud — and not his attack on the old generation’s stand regarding the Talmud (*Divrei Yemei Yisra’el*, II, p. 139). My discussion in the text shows that I think the question is more complicated. Similarly, Mahler regards Euchel’s depiction of the marranos’ way of observing the *mitzvo*t as reflecting the author’s extreme stand which is identical with that of the extreme *maskilim*; namely, that the *mitzvo*t “have no importance from the point of view of religion, natural and rational religion that is.” As I shall attempt to show below, Euchel is skeptical about the observance of the *mitzvo*t, yet he does not put his skepticism into practice. Klausner, on the other hand, regards Euchel’s writings as being “preaching for Haskalah combined with the fear of god” (*Historiah Shel Hasifrut Ha’ivrit*, I, p. 161).

¹²² “Igro

¹²³ *Ibid.*

mitzvot? In other words, how would a Jew retain his identity as a Jew while attempting to adopt the non-Jewish aspects of European culture? There is no doubt in my mind that the question is ironic. The key to the deciphering of the irony is given to the reader in the presupposition that the non-Jews in the stature of Socrates cannot achieve happiness and wholesomeness. This presupposition is contrary to the stand of Haskalah, for sure, and to be more specific, to the teachings of Mendelssohn. It is quite possible that again Euchel had in mind a phrase that he himself had translated from Mendelssohn's *Jerusalem* in his biography. It says, "according to the principles and fundamentals of the Israelite religion and its teachings, all the inhabitants of the universe and all the dwellers of the earth are destined to happiness and wholesomeness."¹²⁴ Thus the question could be regarded as a rhetorical question, with some sardonic tone imbedded in it, whose intention is to point out that a Jew without the *mitzvot* could indeed be as happy as everyone else.

The second impression of Meshulam is from the Christian way of worship. Although he does criticize the priests' zeal, he characterizes the worship as being very similar to the Jewish worship: "Most of their prayers are the songs of David from the book of *Psalms* translated into their language. The chief of the priests is dressed with a white coat and golden ephod [. . .] and I saw them observing customs like the customs of Israel: they are praying *tfilat hashkavah* [footnote: this is how the prayer of *hazkarat neshamot* is called among the Spaniards], and lighting candles for the souls of the dead. I did not know whether they had seen the custom of Israel and did like it, or whether those customs came to us while we were in exile among them; for I did not know whether there is any mention of these customs in either the Jerusalem or Babylonian Talmud. Let me know your view in this matter."¹²⁵ Meshulam again is using the same technique of the rhetorical question, implying that some Jewish customs are not Jewish at all in their origin, but indeed are a direct borrowing from Christianity. Since the central ideological issue in the story as well as the literary theme is the changing of customs, Meshulam's elaboration on past borrowing of customs from outside the Jewish spheres is of utmost importance. Euchel does not deal here with the issue of purifying and refining the Jewish religion from the additional, foreign elements within it; his intention, it seems, is to set the record straight regarding the existence of past borrowing of customs, and therefore of the possibility in accordance with accepted precedents to do the same in the future. He may have purposely selected some aspects of the Christian worship which Meshulam is very

¹²⁴ *Rabenu Hehacham*, p. 62. Cf. Moshe Mendelssohn, *Yerushalayim, Kitvei Moshe Mendelssohn* [The Writings of M.M.] (Tel Aviv, 1947), p. 96. Similar views are expressed by Mendelssohn in his controversy with Lavater (*ibid.*, p. 183).

¹²⁵ "Igröt Meshulam," p. 45. Saul Berlin, too, is one of the few *maskilim* who alluded to direct borrowing by Judaism from Christianity in his *Ktav Yosher*, p. 16b; cf. "The Religious Reforms of 'Traditionalist' Rabbi Saul Berlin," p. 8.

careful to note: prayer in translation (although probably not in the vernacular), and an orderly sermon delivered by the chief priest while the worshippers were in complete silence.¹²⁶ These items, it should be noted, became the first demands of changes which the early religious reformers, Hebrew as well as German-Jewish, have preached during the last two decades of the eighteenth century and the first two decades of the nineteenth century.¹²⁷

The treatment of these two religious phenomena by Euchel may be the clue to his hidden, though not yet verbal, inclination regarding the Jewish religion at the modern day and age of the Enlightenment. In the face of a limited observance of Judaism by the marranos, and the foreign elements in traditional Judaism, a preference may have been alluded to by Euchel. Indeed the truer form of Judaism of the two may be the purified version of the marrano Jews, which may be referred to as some form of deistic Judaism. This preference is being signaled in the story through Meshulam's very positive attitude toward the marrano Jew whom he meets, and through his outright sympathy toward and his identification with the community of the marranos.¹²⁸

It is obvious that Meshulam rejected his grandfather's interpretation of Judaism, and that he is not willing to and in effect does not accept that heritage. It is further clear that Meshulam has indeed changed externally as he adopts his father's view of Judaism. However, spiritually there are ample indications in his questions and doubts to point out that Meshulam would exceed his father's path, and that his religious stand is in the process of becoming more extreme, that is, leaning toward reform. The changing of the clothes by itself is not the symbol of Euchel's desire for changing the Jewish religion, as has been stated by some students of Haskalah, notably by Barzilay. It is his doubts, and the subtle, literary devices within the story which may signal Euchel's hidden tendencies.

In addition, there are several comments of social importance which are put in Meshulam's mouth. Meshulam comes out with a very interesting theory regarding the causes of the persecution of the Jews in Spain. It was not as a result of god's punishment, nor was it the zeal of the priests. The Jews themselves were responsible for the persecutions, according to Meshulam; as they accumulated wealth, they became conceitful and arrogant, and the Spanish masses became jealous of them. Their priests encouraged the actions of the masses not out of religious zeal, but out of sheer jealousy. Meshulam cites his father as contrast to the Jews' conceit of their wealth. The attack of

¹²⁶ "Igrot Meshulam," p. 45.

¹²⁷ See my paper cited above in note 57.

¹²⁸ "Igrot Meshulam," p. 44.

the Jews here is direct; they are to be blamed for the persecutions and not the Christian priests. Alleviating the blame from the priests could be understood by this *maskil's* inclination to see in Europe — and it is Christian Europe for sure — the symbol of enlightenment in all of its aspects, including the religious aspects.¹²⁹ However, it is rather difficult to suppose that Euchel's intention here is merely to issue a new historiosophical theory concerning the Spanish Jews and their expulsion from Spain. For the satire which he is writing must be timely, must be relevant, and must have a direct bearing on pressing issues. And indeed, I believe, Euchel is referring to contemporary Jews, their arrogance, and their eagerness to show off their wealth; undoubtedly he is alluding to his apprehensions concerning the possible results, that is of history repeating itself. Appropriately, the father, symbol of a moderate *maskil* and educator, is the embodiment of the Haskalah in his modesty, his deeds in general, and in his help to his fellow men.¹³⁰

Meshulam also relates some stories which refer to the Jews in a negative tone,¹³¹ and he writes enthusiastically about the place of women in European society, a phenomenon which he has not been accustomed to.¹³² Finally, he devotes the last chapter to a discussion of the artistic merits of Italian poetry, as translated by Ephraim Luzzatto, compared with the inferior Arab poetry.¹³³ This artistic preference is harmonious with the general trend of Euchel's fictional work.

In this literary work, which unfortunately has not been given proper attention in the study of Hebrew letters, Euchel gives expression to the most pressing issues of his generation; it was a generation of transition, a generation in the process of transformation from a generally closed and introvert society to one whose openness to European values and ideas could be discerned in Germany. Thus Euchel highlights the tantalizing problems of the individual Jew, as an individual and a member of his community; he offers a number of view-points, and makes some headway toward his ideological path, which is the path that he proposed to the Hebrew Haskalah. It seems that more important than the decisions which have been made by Meshulam, regarding the customs, are the latter's questions and doubts as to the path of Judaism, and concerning his own way as a modern man in a modern world. Behind the ironic question, in the literary context, which Meshulam confronts his friend

¹²⁹ There is some tension between Euchel's desire to portray Europe as the epitome of enlightenment, inclusive of the European religion, and his tendencies to criticize the clerics for their zeal, their extreme and harsh stand in religious matters and their intolerance (*ibid.*, p. 45).

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 81–84.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 127: Jews betraying their fellow Jew; p. 173: The marrano Jew requests that Meshulam should not identify him as a Jew even to the Italian Jews lest his identity be revealed. Thus he expresses his distrust toward his coreligionists.

¹³² *Ibid.*, pp. 84–84, 175.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 245–249.

with, there is the deep-rooted, tantalizing dilemma which the *maskilim* of the first generation in Germany as well as the East European *maskilim* in the second half of the nineteenth century were facing: "Is it possible to be wholesome and happy without the observance of the *mitzvot*?" The best example of a late treatment of the same question could be found in the autobiography of Moshe Lilienblum, *Ha'ot Ne'urim* [Transgressions of Youth]. I believe that Euchel, in his artistic sensitivity, felt the pulse of the times, and has successfully epitomized it. Typically and significantly, the tone of that sentence is a question. It should be added that Euchel resorted to another slogan of Enlightenment, this time a more recognized one, although in an affirmative tone. "The foundation of the investigation, or probe, of man is man," he wrote.¹³⁴ It is the Hebrew version of Alexander Pope's "The proper study of mankind is man."¹³⁵ Aside from the meaning of that slogan, focusing human attention and endeavour on man, it is significant that a European Enlightenment banner is adopted by Hebrew Haskalah, and that it is in the affirmative tone.

EUHEL'S OTHER WORKS

The other works of Euchel represent the midstream of Hebrew Haskalah. As early as 1782 Euchel started his Enlightenment activities by publishing a pamphlet, *Sfat 'Emet*,¹³⁶ in which he advocates the establishment of a modern school for the Jewish children in Königsberg. The pamphlet is very moderate in its demands and in its tone. Euchel cites the limitation of the span of formal education and more importantly the cursory and the disorderly fashion of teaching as the two causes for the cultural deterioration among the German Jews. He supports his call for changes in Jewish education on similar criticism voiced previously by such traditionalist rabbis as Judah Liva ben Bezalel and

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 176: "Yesod behinat ha'adam — HA'ADAM." A similar use of this saying could be found in his article on the burial issue, *Hame'asef*, III (1786), p. 203: "Tachlit haqirat ha'adam hu — HA'ADAM" [The purpose of the investigation, or, probe, of man is man].

¹³⁵ Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Man* (Dublin, 1764), p. 18 [Epistle II]. The original version in the first edition (as cited in a note, *ibid.*) reads: "The only science of Mankind is Man." Cf. the seventh edition (London, 1736), Epistle II, for the original version: "Know then Thyself, presume not God to scan; The only Science of Mankind is *Man*."

¹³⁶ Isaac Euchel, *Sfat 'Emet* [Language of Truth] (Königsberg, 1782). He writes: "The [heavenly] lights have been extinguished in our days, and we grope in the dark like the blind [. . .] [p. 2]. Most of the children of our nation come out of school at the age of thirteen, and they wander in the streets looking for their livelihood and for the physical necessities, and they forget the little which they had learned, and after a few days they would have nothing [of what they had learned] in their hands, they would forsake their Torah, and would be failing in the fear of god [p. 3]. And all of this is a result of the transgressions of his youth, from the lack of supervision of him in his infancy. For if his parents and teachers had instructed him in those days slowly in accordance with the work facing him, to elevate him one by one on the steps of practical wisdom [. . .] in his end he would be very prosperous [p. 4]. [. . .] to establish a special school for the members of our community, in order to educate the youths according to their pace and to bring them closer gradually to the word of god. We shall seat there learned people versed in language and understanding to instruct them the way in which they should go" (p. 8).

Isaiah Halevi Horwitz whom he cites rather extensively.¹³⁷ His tone of writing is enthusiastic, full of trust in himself and in his cause. However, one notices that the writer is cautious not to offend anyone responsible for the situation, namely, the rabbis and the teachers, except for the quotations from the rabbis cited above. Compared to Wessely's call in *Divrei Shalom Ve'emet*, which was published in the same year,¹³⁸ Euchel's pamphlet is narrow in its scope of demands and in its argumentations, and is rather a work of a dilettante. Ironically, Euchel, who is more extreme in his later enlightenment and religious stand, is very moderate in his first public expression, whereas the more moderate but mature Wessely is more extreme in *Divrei Shalom Ve'emet*.¹³⁹ It should be noted that as far as is known the rabbis did not reply to Euchel's call for educational reform, and his pamphlet went unheeded.

Among his other writings we find Euchel's translation into Hebrew of Dr. Herz's works, one preaching for religious reform,¹⁴⁰ and the other, "A Doctor's Prayer,"¹⁴¹ which belongs to the old order in Judaism. Going in the footsteps of Mendelssohn, he translates also from Hebrew into German, as did the other *maskilim*. This is a translation and a *Be'ur* of the book of *Mishlei*.¹⁴² In his introduction to the translation and exegesis, Euchel justifies the translation of the Scriptures into German, and describes the language problem of the Jews as resulting from the exile. Interestingly, Euchel explains why he chose to work on the book of *Mishlei*: "For there is nothing in it touching [concerning] religion and faith."¹⁴³ Apparently, he did not want to involve himself again in religious conflicts. Euchel also published an edition of a classical work, as did the other *maskilim*. It is Maimonides' *Moreh Nevuchin* with Solomon Maimon's interpretation.¹⁴⁴ Previously he published

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 4–7, 8–9. The quotations, from Judah Liva's *Gur 'Aryeh* [A Lion's Whelp; first published in Prague in 1578] and from Horwitz, run about four out of eleven pages of the text.

¹³⁸ Wessely's first pamphlet appeared in or before January 1782 [cf. Zinberg, *Toldot*, V, p. 308, note 14, and Charles Ozer, "Jewish Education in the Transition from Ghetto to Emancipation," *Historia Judaica*, IX (No. 1, April, 1947), p. 87, note 19]. Although Euchel's pamphlet is not dated, we have a clue as to its approximate date. For Euchel requests that responses to his writing be sent before "shloshah yemei hagbalah haba'im 'aleinu letovah" [The three days of limitation — before Shavu'ot — which are forthcoming] *Sfat 'Emet*, p. 9). Thus the date of publication must be close to Shavu'ot, at least a few weeks before the holiday. Although Euchel does not mention Wessely's pamphlet here he might have been influenced by it.

¹³⁹ See my study "Naphtali Herz Wessely's Attitude toward the Jewish Religion as a Mirror of a Generation in Transition (During the Early Period of Hebrew Haskalah in Germany)," *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 26 (1974), pp. 222–238.

¹⁴⁰ See note 86 above.

¹⁴¹ *Hame'asef*, VI (1790), pp. 242–245.

¹⁴² See his announcement in *Hame'asef* regarding his plans, volume IV (1788), p. 240, where a sense of mission is noted: "God willing, we shall walk in this path toward our goal to offer the translation of all the Scriptures before the children of Israel, and it would be their guiding light in their road to understand the words of our holy prophets, *ibid.*, p. 242, 262.

¹⁴³ *Mishlei* (Offenbach, 1805; first edition: Berlin, 1790), pp. 11a–12a. The German translation, in Hebrew characters, appeared in a separate volume entitled *Darchoi No'am* [Ways of Pleasantness] (Dessau, 1804).

¹⁴⁴ Without giving Maimon due credit; see Euchel's announcement in *Hame'asef*, IV (1788), p. 242. The first volume appeared in 1791.

Elijah Levita's *Pirquei Rabi Eliyahu*.¹⁴⁵ He also announced his plans to publish Avicenna's *Sefer Refu'ot*, however, he has not materialized this plan.¹⁴⁶

His other major work is his play, *R. Henoch* [. . .] *oder was tut men damit*, a comedy which focuses on the clash between the old and the young generations regarding social, cultural and religious issues. The representatives of the old generation are depicted in a negative way whereas the *maskilim*, the true ones as opposed to the false *maskilim*, are viewed and characterized positively. This play has been discussed extensively by students of Enlightenment especially by Yiddish writers.¹⁴⁷

In the last years of his life we note Euchel's disappointment with Haskalah as he is apprehensive of the deterioration of the Jews. He expresses his dissatisfaction with the developments after Mendelssohn's death in an article in *Hame'asef*.¹⁴⁸ And in the turn of the century, when Shalom Hacohen requests his advice and patronage to the re-issuance of the journal of the *maskilim*, *Hame'asaf*, he writes back to him a very desperate letter. "I have also tasted the dregs of the cup of trembling which came on the nation of Judea and its enlighteners," he writes. "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. [. . .] wander outside, surround the streets, open your eyes and see whether you should find one in a city and two in a family who would wish to listen to you, whether they could sense that the Hebrew language is on your tongue; — thus have the times and their results overturned, thus have the people and their views changed."¹⁴⁹ Eight years before, Euchel is instrumental in establishing a society, *Gesellschaft der Freunde*, whose goals were to serve as a social framework for the enlighteners who could not find their place within the traditional *Kehilah*. Euchel served as the society's director from 1797 to 1801.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁵ Elijah Levita, *Pirquei Rabbi Eliyahu* [The Chapters of Rabbi Elijah] (Berlin, 1788).

¹⁴⁶ *Hame'asef*, VII (No. 1, 1794), p. 92.

¹⁴⁷ Especially Erik, Reizen and Stif (see note 1 above). See also the writings of Zinberg (*Toldot*, V, pp. 91–95) and Weinryb (notes 1, 10).

¹⁴⁸ *Hame'asef*, VII (1797), s. 365 [in the article which is cited in note 68 above].

¹⁴⁹ Shalom Hacohen, *Ktav Yosher* [Epistle of Righteousness] (Wien, 1820), pp. 95–96; published also in Letteris' biography of Euchel.

¹⁵⁰ See Lesser's book cited in note 3 above.

More than all the other *me'asfim*, Euchel seems to epitomize the conflicts that confronted the young *maskilim* of the time, the difficult dilemma as to where to turn: back to the old Judaism, or away from it, toward the new order of Enlightenment. Should it be some form of a modernized Judaism, or an utterly naked, deistic Judaism; should they follow the will of Mendelssohn, or the philosophy of Friedländer and the other German-Jewish enlighteners? In his treatment of the Jewish tradition, its religion and laws, Euchel symbolizes the end of the period of Mendelssohn and Wessely, which is a moderate Haskalah combined with a modern form of traditionalism. He also represents the increase of the demands on the part of Hebrew Haskalah for religious changes, and the beginning of the attacks on the religious authorities, the rabbis. It is highly significant that Euchel endeavoured to act within the spheres to Judaism in order to reshape it from within. And finally, the question whether or not he personally was observing the *mitzvot* in full or in part, which had been discussed without any substantial grounds by some scholars, is of course of importance, yet cannot be satisfactorily answered. Sayings, such as the one attributed to rabbi Hirsch Lewin, could not and should not substitute for a serious discussion of Euchel's *Weltanschauung*. This saying represents the traditionalists' view of a *maskil*, and not a factual evidence of this *maskil* himself.

Postscript

I have submitted recently two articles on Isaac Euchel "The Beginning of the Epistolary Genre in Modern Hebrew Literature: Isaac Euchel and His Letters" (referred to in note 106); "The Question of Affinity between the *Letters Persanes* and "Igrot Meshulam": The Beginning of the Epistolary Genre in Hebrew Enlightenment Literature" (based on a paper delivered at the Fourth International Congress on the Enlightenment, Yale, July 1975).

Sha'anana has recently published another study on Euchel in which he portrays him as preaching for assimilation: "The Letters of Meshulam as Symptom and Genre," *Baruch Kurzweil Memorial Volume* (Tel Aviv & Ramat Gan, 1975), pp. 354-374.

Alexander Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn: A Biographical Study* (Alabama, 1973), discusses both Euchel and his biography on Mendelssohn.

Addition to note 113: See also my study "Saul Berlin's *Ktav Yosher*: The Beginning of Satire in Modern Hebrew Literature of the Haskalah in Germany," *Leo Baeck Year Book*, 20 (1975), pp. 109-127. I have completed another study on Saul Berlin's satire entitled "Aspects of Hebrew Enlightenment — Saul Berlin: Involvement and Detachment."