Aspects of Hebrew Enlightenment Satire Saul Berlin: Involvement and Detachment

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The name of Naphtali Herz Wessely, the 250th anniversary of whose birth fell in 1975/1976, is generally well known as one of the exponents of Hebrew Enlightenment in Germany at the end of the eighteenth century. He is especially known for the four pamphlets, Divrei Shalom Ve'emet [Words of Peace and Truth], which he published in 1782-1785, advocating changes in the oldfashioned, traditional Jewish education. Following the publication of the first pamphlet, a controversy ensued between the traditionalists and the Maskilim [enlighteners]. This controversy had a silent participant, a rabbi turned Maskil. Rabbi Saul Berlin, a controversial figure in his own right, came to the aid of Wessely.² He wrote a satiric work, probably in 1784, but did not allow it to be published during his lifetime. The satire, Ktav Yosher [An Epistle of Righteousness], was published immediately after Saul Berlin's death (on 16th November 1794), towards the end of 1794 or early in 1795. The Maskilim who published the pamphlet apparently used a manuscript that had been circulating among them some ten years before.³ Although there was no apparent indication as to the intention of the publishers, it is quite clear that they had wished to set it in print as a token memorial to the deceased Maskil. For otherwise it would seem rather strange that they should publish an out-of-date satire which aimed at a controversy that had been long forgotten. Wessely's "sins" by that time had been forgiven, and he continued on his moderate Enlightenment course which had been interrupted by his Divrei Shalom Ve'emet. Nowhere in the pamphlet

¹On the controversy see Moshe Samet, 'Mendelssohn, Weisel, and the Rabbis of Their Time', in Studies in the History of the Jewish People and the Land of Israel, Haifa, Israel 1970, pp. 249–253 [in Hebrew], and Charles L. Ozer, 'Jewish Education in the Transition from Ghetto to Emancipation', in Historia Judaica, IX (1947), No. 1, 2, pp. 75–94, 137–158. See also my article '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)', in Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte, XXVI (1974), No. 3, pp. 222–238.

²On Saul Berlin see my studies: 'Some Notes on the Nature of Saul Berlin's Writings', in *The Journal of Hebraic Studies*, I (1970), No. 2., pp. 47-61; 'Hareformah Hadatit Shel Harav 'Haḥaredi' Saul Berlin' [The Religious Reforms of 'Traditionalist' Rabbi Saul Berlin], in *Hebrew Union College Annual*, XLII (1971), pp. 1-23 [Hebrew section]. The most comprehensive bibliography of and on Saul Berlin was published by Moshe Samet, 'R. Saul Berlin Uchtavav' [Rabbi Saul Berlin and His Writings], in *Kirjath Sepher*, XLIII (1968), pp. 429-441. See also Samet's 'Besamim Rosh' Shel R. Saul Berlin' [R. Saul Berlin's Besamim Rosh'], in *Kirjath Sepher*, XLVIII (1973), pp. 509-523. A comprehensive, annotated bibliography of sources dealing with *Klav Yosher* and a discussion of this satire appears in my essay 'Saul Berlin's Ktav Yosher. The Beginning of Satire in Modern Hebrew Literature of the Haskalah in Germany', published in *LBI Year Book XX* (1975), pp. 109-127.

³ Cf. Israel Zinberg, *Toldot Sifrut Yisra'el* [The History of the Literature of Israel], V. Merḥavyah, Israel 1959, p. 122 [Hebrew]; Ben-Zion Katz, *Rabanut*, *Ḥasidut*, *Haskalah* [Rabbinate, Ḥasidism, Haskalah], I, Tel Aviv 1956, p. 240.

do the publishers cite the author by name, neither do they acknowledge his having died. As a matter of fact, they published the manuscript as it was, intact, leaving even the misleading chronogram, alluding to the year 1784, the date of its writing, as if it were the date of publication.4

It may be safely said that the Maskilim who were responsible for the publication were indeed very much aware of the timeless value of Ktav Yosher both as a satiric work of art and as a satire which could be used to enhance the cause of Enlightenment beyond the limits of the Divrei Shalom Ve'emet controversy. No longer were the editors of Hame'asef, the journal of Hebrew Haskalah [Enlightenment] in Germany, adhering to the Enlightenment oracle's instructions not to publish satiric works. Ironically, it was none other than Wessely who insisted that the young Hebrew Maskilim should not utilise the form of satire to further the objectives of Haskalah.⁵ Indeed, it was one of the reasons why Berlin had not issued his satire in print. By this time the moderate line of the journal had undergone a metamorphosis, as had the editorship of Hame'asef. In the first years of the journal, the editors resorted to fables and parables as a means of advocating their enlightenment objectives and of criticising and lampooning their adversaries. However, this policy had not been pursued by the more militant editors. In 1790, Euchel - the first editor of the journal, who became a regular contributor - published a work of satire, 'Igrot Meshulam ben' Uriyah Ha'eshtemo'i [The Letters of Meshulam . . .]. The editor himself, Aharon Wolfssohn, contributed his share to early Hebrew satire by publishing a closet-drama of his entitled Sihah Be'erez Hahayim [A Conversation in the Land of the Living, i.e., in the afterlife].8 Thus Saul Berlin's work of satiric fiction ought to be viewed against the growth of modern Hebrew satire as an artistic endeavour, culminating in the Galician school of Hebrew Haskalah with the satiric works of Joseph Perl and Isaac Erter.

Indeed, Ktav Yosher is a cornerstone of Hebrew satire, a testimony to Saul Berlin's artistic achievement, almost a unique one, in fiction. It is a highly sophisticated work, in which the author utilised very clever and witty techniques of the satiric art, and employed the Hebrew language with a skill rarely seen in Haskalah literature before, as I have tried to show elsewhere.9 The literary

⁴I elaborated on this subject in Appendix 1 of my article in LBI Year Book XX.

⁵See Wessely's letter published in the prospectus Nahal Habsor [The Brook 'Besor', or, Good Tidings] (1783), p. 8 [bound with Hame'asef, I (1784)]. Wessely reiterated his opposition to the use of satire in 'Ma'amar Higur Hadin' [An Essay (on) Search of Justice], in Hame'asef, IV (1788), pp. 97, 98, 165. This article was published also in book form and saw several editions.

⁶The other reasons: a. His father, Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Levin's opposition to Wessely's Divrei Shalom Ve'emet; Saul Berlin did not want to come out in public against his father. b. Berlin was apprehensive lest the figure of the traditionalist rabbi in Ktav Yosher might be identified with his father. c. Since there was a criticism on Wessely implied, if not overtly stated, he did not want to make it public.

⁷Hame'asef, VI (1790), pp. 38-50, 80-85, 171-176, 245-249. On Euchel, see my articles 'Isaac Euchel: Tradition and Change in the First Generation Haskalah Literature in Germany (I)', Journal of Jewish Studies, XXVI, No. 1-2 (Spring-Autumn 1975), pp. 151-165; part II, JJS, XXVII, No. 1 (Spring 1976), pp. 54-70; 'Jewish Identity in Modern Hebrew Literature', Judaism, XXV, No. 4 [100] (Fall 1976), pp. 447–460. *Ibid., VII (1794–1797), pp. 53–67, 120–153, 203–228, 279–298.

See my article in LBI Year Book XX.

critics and historians who ignored Saul Berlin as a creative writer deprived Hebrew literature of one of its best writers. A reversal of this trend is, I believe, a debt that we owe to Hebrew literature as part of its overall re-evaluation.

The present study will undertake to examine three important components of this satire, namely, the role of the narrator, inner structures and motifs, and the overall ideological objectives of the writer and their artistic unity as an integrating tool in this work.

I. THE NARRATOR

A significant insight into the unique nature of Berlin's satire may be gained through an analysis of the dominant "persona" in *Ktav Yosher*. It is the first-person narrator who assumes the person of a rabbi, thus creating the impression that the renowned rabbi-author – "Migdolei Hador", one of the great persons in this generation – as mentioned on the title page, is no other than Saul Berlin himself, 10 although his identity is not revealed by name.

Berlin's predicament was indeed unique, being a practising rabbi himself and related to a well-known rabbinic family. In Saul Berlin's portrayal of the character of the first-person narrator-rabbi one can discern that out of necessity the author had to resort to very sophisticated satiric devices. On the other hand, however, the careful student of Ktav Yosher may further find in the character of the first-person narrator the projection of Berlin's own self-image. Beneath the façade of the narrator-rabbi we find its contrasting image – that of a Maskil. Under the mask we see a committed enlightener who is charged with a sense of mission and duty beyond the mere defence of Wessely. Thus it will be helpful to distinguish in Ktav Yosher between the narrator-rabbi and the satirist-enlightener.¹¹

¹⁰Ktav Yosher [An Epistle of Righteousness], [Berlin? 1794–1795?], on the title page. While no name is used on the title page, a pseudonym does appear inside the book: 'Avdon ben Hillel Hayid'oni (pp. 13a, 16b).

11By "satirist" I refer here to the author who is disguised behind the figure of the narrator-rabbi. Kernan uses the designation "satirist" to refer to the protagonist (Alvin Kernan, The Cankered Muse, New Haven 1959, pp. 7-8; published also in his Modern Satire, New York 1962, p. 167). The literature discussing Ktav Yosher did not make any distinction between the narrator and the author. Some writers even used the identical phrase "a conversation between the author and a melamed" (Simhah Asaf, Megorot Letoldot Hahinuch Beyisra'el, I, Tel Aviv 1925, p. 242; Raphael Mahler, Divrei Yemei Yisra'el Dorot 'Aharonim [The History of Israel, Latter Generations], II, Merhavyah, Israel 19542, p. 78; Ben-Zion Katz, Rabanut, Hasidut, Haskalah, I, p. 240; Joseph Klausner, Historiah Shel Hasifrut Ha'ivrit Hahadashah [History of Modern Hebrew Literature], I, Jerusalem 1960³, p. 133.). That phrase could be traced to its apparent originator, Simhah Asaf. However, the identification of the narrator as "author" ("mehaber") could be traced to the first reviewer of Ktav Yosher in Hame'asef, VII (1796), No. 3, p. 268; the reviewer, D-A, is Dov Ottensosser, according to Steinschneider. In 1861 Eliakim Carmoly picks up the term as he quotes verbatim from the first review in Hame'asef. See his Ha'orvim Uvnei Yonah [Ravens and Pigeons], Rödelheim 1861, p. 41. Later on the term is used by Zinberg, Toldot Sifrut Yisra'el, V, p. 123 [all sources cited above are in Hebrew]. The only writer who does not identify the author with the narrator is C. Duschinsky, The Rabbinate of the Great Synagogue, London, London 1921, p. 21. But strangely enough, he identifies the narrator as "a modern youth". Duschinsky

Berlin writes from within the Jewish community as a narrator-rabbi. The satirist-enlightener, too, would have it no other way. He writes ex cathedra, as a rabbi, regarding himself as "one of the great persons in this generation". And his alter ego – the satirist – revels in it. In his authority as a spiritual leader and a religious scholar, he is on a par with his rivals. He speaks their language, uses their sources for his argumentation, and employs their talmudic and rabbinic methodology. In other words, he plays their game, and plays it very well indeed. As far as the satirist within him is concerned, he is strategically superior to his adversaries. 13

Berlin does it mainly by portraying the narrator as being objective in the controversy. In the opening lines of the book, where he describes the commotion among the people upon the publication of Wessely's controversial pamphlet, the dominant role of the narrator is as one who serves merely as a recorder, taking no sides in the dispute. By presenting himself as taking an objective stand, the narrator would like to appear to the reader as a mediator, who would listen to the two sides in order to seek the truth, and pass judgment on Wessely. He must persuade the reader that he is sincere and authentic. In addition, by pretending to be objective, not knowing what the controversy is all about, the narrator prepares the background for the surprising denouement about the Kabalistic nature of Wessely's Divrei Shalom Ve'emet. To be sure, this record has been tampered with by the clever satirist. In the "quoted" enunciations by the people, one can hear the ironic echo planted by the satirist.

Consider the following sentence: "We were meritorious in having this honour [of being] a unique nation and a priestly kingdom." ¹⁵ One would find it quite difficult to dispute the authenticity of such a declaration as befitting the mentality of the traditionalist people. Undoubtedly, that is the best compliment one can pay to a satirist. However, this phrase must be examined against the background of the Hebrew Enlightenment ideology. Moses Mendelssohn – the guide and master of Hebrew Enlightenment – argues in his writings that the Jewish nation was selected by the deity to convey and perpetuate the idea of monotheism among the nations. The Jewish people – Mendelssohn implies – is no better than any other people, ¹⁶ but indeed not inferior (as far as its rights are

apparently sensed the dichotomy that exists between the author and the protagonist, but erred in his identification of the latter, unless he considered "a modern youth" to be synonymous with "maski!".

¹²Ktav Yosher, p. 8b: "that he [the rabbi] speaks to a man like himself". The title page establishes the author-narrator as "one of the great persons of the generation" ("Migdolei hador"). The term is being applied also to the fictional rabbi ("gadol" and "gedol hador" – *ibid.*, pp. 8b, 10b, 11b), thus putting the two as equals.

¹³The satirist must be desirous to portray himself as superior to his adversaries so as to achieve his satiric objectives. Cf. Arthur M. Clark, 'The Art of Satire and the Satiric Spectrum', in *Studies in Literary Modes*, London 1946, p. 47. See the ensuing discussion in n. 32–33 below, and their related text.

¹⁴The narrator states it emphatically: "[...] to crown the truth among my people" (Ktav Yosher, p. 13a). Cf. Clark, Studies in Literary Modes, p. 36.

¹⁵Ktav Tosher, p. 2a: "ki 'al ken zachinu lechol hakavod hazeh [,] 'am sgulah umamlechet kohanim' (italics, in the English translation, are mine).

¹⁶Moses Mendelssohn, Jerusalem, New York 1969, pp. 89, 93, 117-119.

concerned). Mendelssohn and his writings were no strangers to Saul Berlin. He refers to Mendelssohn's Be'ur in this satire, ¹⁷ and if my interpretation is correct, Berlin even alludes to Mendelssohn's philosophy of Judaism – Enlightenment Judaism, that is – in this satiric work. ¹⁸ Importantly, prior to the Wessely controversy, Berlin wrote an approbation of Mendelssohn's monumental translation into German and exegesis of the Pentateuch. ¹⁹

In addition, there are some intrinsic proofs in *Ktav Yosher* as to Berlin's stand on the alleged utter disregard for European culture and its secular knowledge among traditionalist Jewry.²⁰

Thus the ironic implication of the quote is quite obvious. The narrator is very careful to allude to unquestionable *Haskalah* beliefs – cited in the negative as quotes – which serve as guidelines for revealing the narrator's covert stand.

Gradually, Saul Berlin builds up the underlying ironical tone in his introductory chapter where the legend for the correct reading is covertly presented to the reader. He further employs certain accepted Enlightenment concepts intended as guides, or criteria, for the deciphering of his covert intentions. Speaking of Wessely's alleged heretical tendencies, the narrator quotes the complaining people as follows: "For this is the manner of heresy which attracts man's heart by advising him to listen to wisdom, and to turn his heart [be tempted] toward reason, and the little children are attracted by the ideas, which are planted in reason given as a godly gift." ²¹ The narrator, reporting objectively, incorporates within the quote which is critical of Wessely some positive terms – wisdom and reason – so as to present the reader with the key to the irony. Thus if wisdom and reason are positive concepts in the enlightener's eyes, Wessely's alleged heresy is no heresy at all. The narrator further intensifies his positive allusions by stating that reason is God-given.

The narrator also employs some sophisticated biblical allusions in order to hint as to his covert stand in his all-important introductory chapter. Citing the people complaining about Wessely's alleged heresy, he quotes them as follows: "all the mizvot [commandments] and customs and the yoke which are on our neck [and] are as a snail which melts away and is no more". 22 The last part of the citation – the use of the simile – is a quote from Psalms 58:9, which is the narrator's own contribution; for it is inconceivable that the people would use this rare and difficult verse. Indeed its rarity and difficulty attest to its authorship, and it is part of the double play of the narrator as the satirist, which Berlin is thus highlighting. The narrator – playing here his role as a satirist – is already showing his attitude by using the word "yoke" in reference to the mizvot, which

¹⁷Ktav Yosher, p. 7b; the rabbi refers to Mendelssohn and to his translation into German of the Pentateuch.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 11a, 12a-b, ch. 8; and see relevant discussion below.

¹⁹ Haskamot Harabanim' [Rabbis' Approbations] in Netivot Hashalom [Paths of Peace], I, Bereshit, Berlin 1783, p. 2b.

²⁰ Ktav Yosher, pp. 2a, 4b, 5b.

²¹Ibid., p. 20: "ki chen darkah shel minut moshechet lev 'adam be'omrah lehaqshiv lahochmah ulehatot lev latvunah, vehayeladim rakim nimshachim 'ahar hara'yonim, hanatu'a basechel matat 'elodim netunah."

²²Ibid., p. 2a.

is his declared stand throughout this pamphlet.²³ The simile in the Psalms verse is given originally in a negative context: this is the fate of the wicked, that they would melt away just as the snail appears to melt as it crawls along. Therefore, the comparison to the *mizvot* adds a negative tone to it. Furthermore, the snail, as one of the unclean creatures, indeed does not contribute positively to the image of *mizvot*. The figure of the snail carrying its shell adds to the notion that the *mizvot* are a burden, yet an aimless and an endless burden. Significantly, Berlin added to the original Psalms verse his ending of the quote, "Ve'enenu" – and is no more. The voice of the people here is none other than the satirist's voice covertly expressing his view on the *mizvot* in Judaism.

In order to make his position clear to the reader, the narrator uses exclamatory phrases such as "halilah" (God forbid!).²⁴ At times he puts these exclamatory phrases within parentheses, as in: "(has milehazkir)" (mum's the word!).²⁵ Both ways, the interjections are overdone to serve as satirical clues for the reader to note. These clues are interwoven with the many other ironic clues in the same paragraph and in the introductory scenes in general. This technique is applied also within a monologue of the melamed [religious teacher], where a phrase in parentheses might be attributed to either the speaker or the narrator. To the sophisticated reader, this ambiguity does not exist, for in the melamed he can hear his master's voice, as it were. In one such instance Berlin brings to the fore the whole issue of the overemphasis on the study of Torah, to which some rabbis allegedly objected, citing the exact phraseology which had been used by both Maskilim and rabbis.²⁶ This technique is further developed in the Hebrew satire in Isaac Erter's writings.²⁷

II. THE NARRATOR'S INVOLVEMENT AND DETACHMENT

It has been observed previously that the narrator endeavours to appear objective in the controversy. However, at the end of the introductory scenes in chapter one, one notes certain developments in the narrator's stand: there are some overt signs as to the narrator's true opinion of Wessely. The narrator is not as yet ready to come out openly in favour of Wessely. For by so doing he would destroy the whole momentum gained by "discovering" Wessely's righteousness after the long tirades of both the *melamed* and the rabbi against

²³Krav Yosher, p. 3b – the many superstitious customs; p. 4a – the melamed praising the abundance of mizvot; also: pp. 5a, 9a, etc.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 3b.

²⁵ Ibid. Both expressions appear within five lines; they are repeated in the same sentence in p. 13a.
²⁶ Ibid., p. 4a: "ki 'asur lilmod harbeh miqra [...] min'u bnechem min hahigayon." Cf. my article 'Mordechai Gumpel Schnaber: The First Religious Reform Theoretician of the Hebrew Haskalah in Germany', in The Jewish Quarterly Review, LXIV (1974), No. 4, p. 312.

²⁷The author elaborates on this subject in his study of Erter which is to be published shortly in the *Proceedings of the Sixth World Congress of Jewish Studies*. It is entitled 'Narrative Techniques of Isaac Erter's Satire "Gilgul Nefesh" [Transmigration of a Soul]' (Hebrew). Another paper, 'Satiric Modes in Isaac Erter's "Gilgul Nefesh" (Hebrew) was also submitted for publication.

him. His technique is that of an objective reporter describing his physical reaction upon learning of the people's accusations against Wessely: "I began to tremble." His physical reaction is clearly an external expression of his mental reaction which is also described in the apparently objective reporting style: "my thoughts became confused". The explanation given by the narrator attempts to carry on the ostensible air of factual, objective statements, yet it is intentionally opinionated in Wessely's favour: "For I have known previously the man and his converse, his righteous heart and his pure spirit." ²⁸

The narrator goes on to cite Wessely's works in a highly euphuistic language in which rhymes are also used. Both are a characteristic of a learned *Maskil*, whose language is clear and poetic, and of a positive attitude towards the subject discussed.²⁹ By contrast, both the *melamed* and the rabbi are characterised by the grammatically faulty language. There is no doubt as to where the narrator's sympathies lie.

Gradually, the narrator introduces the possibility that there has been a misunderstanding and that the hitherto righteous Wessely could not have turned heretic. Berlin does this by having the narrator express his doubt in the form of "who knows [...] perhaps [...]."³⁰ The purpose of this approach is to maintain the narrator's credibility as an unbiased bystander. In order to strengthen the narrator's impartiality, he is led to reassure the melamed: "do not fear, for I am like you".³¹ Of course he is not, and even the melamed acknowledges the narrator's superiority,³² for indeed the satirist must be – and endeavours to be – superior to his adversaries.³³ In order to maintain the narrator's ostensible objectivity in the controversy, yet to hint as to his preference, the melamed is made to recognise the narrator's sympathy towards Wessely. He tells the narrator: "I saw that you love him [Wessely]."³⁴ The narrator does not, and would not deny it.

At the encounter with the rabbi, too, the narrator achieves an air of objectivity by having the rabbi state: "I have known your ways, for you desire grace even for the one who does not deserve it." The narrator's apparent tolerance is acknowledged and accepted by the rabbi. The rabbi is being portrayed as somewhat more progressive than the *melamed* in preparation for, and anticipation of the former's final conversion and his recognition of the satirically twisted, Kabalistic [mystical] interpretation of Wessely's *Divrei Shalom Ve'emet*.

²⁸ Ktav Yosher, p. 2b.

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 2b-3a. Occasionally the melamed, too, speaks briefly in rhymes (p. 3a). See also the beginning of chapter 6.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 3a.

³¹Ibid., ³¹'Al tira ki keficha 'ani.'' Berlin uses a unique biblical expression to show the narrator's erudition and scholarship. The phrase appears in Job 33:6. There is also a touch of irony, which Saul Berlin, a master of the Hebrew language, utilises for his satire. The idiom "keficha" – like you – is ambiguous because of its rarity, for it literally means: [I am] "like your mouth". Indeed, the two are different in their language and style; the narrator's reassurance is pungently ironic.

³² Ibid.

³³Cf. Clark, Studies in Literary Modes, p. 47.

³⁴ Ktav Yosher, p. 3a.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 8b: "Va'ani yada'ti derachecha ki hafez hesed 'atah, va'afilu lemi she'eno hagun."

Furthermore, the rabbi is the one who stamps the narrator as belonging to the traditionalist camp by saying, "I know that you would be the first to lay your hand on him" [Wessely, if found guilty].36

The first direct, overt expression of involvement on the part of the narrator takes place then. He relates his wish to suggest to the rabbi that "we and the rest of the sages of the generation" should communicate with Wessely. Although he associates himself with the traditionalists ("we") – or appears to be doing that in preparation for his satirical defence of Wessely – the narrator in effect proposes to do what Wessely himself had requested in his pamphlet, namely, that the rabbis should write to him and start a dialogue with him, a request which they ignored.³⁷ However, before he is given the chance to speak up, the rabbi puts his hand on the narrator's hand to stop him.³⁸ There is an apparent ironic, symbolic twist in this play of hands after the rabbi had told him before that he, the narrator, would surely be the first to lay his hand on Wessely; now the rabbi is the one who holds him back from his attempt to reach Wessely and settle the controversy.

The narrator's involvement becomes stronger as he seeks to obtain Wessely's book, but is unable to. The motif of the search for an anti-traditionalist book which everybody is talking about, yet no one, or few, have actually seen or read, is later developed in the satiric work of Joseph Perl, Megaleh Tmirin. 39 Significantly, the book is given to him by the rabbi; indeed, the rabbi is being portrayed as possessing the potential for being "converted". The narrator describes in detail his reactions after having read Wessely's book, 40 and at this juncture we see him as completely involved in the controversy. He no longer wears any mask. Like many a narrator in the Haskalah literature, the narrator in Ktav Yosher cannot remain aloof. He is involved in this controversy of Haskalah; he is committed, and he can no longer remain a bystander as he was in the beginning of Ktav Yosher. Filled with a sense of mission and with the notion that the fictional realia which he has created is as true, real and obligatory as reality itself, the Haskalah narrator would tend to re-create these in his fiction. In many instances it will be manifested in the way the narrator is commissioned - in his own story - to spread the new truth which he had discovered and which is part of the Haskalah ideology. Thus as soon as the rabbi is "converted", realising Wessely's innocence, he commissions the narrator to write a book on the controversy and to put in it his persuasive defence of Wessely. He is instructed to further circulate the book among the Jews so as to spread the word of Wessely's righteousness. 41 Significantly, the rabbi is employing the phrase God said to Gid'on upon his mission to save the Israelites: "and now go in this your might,

³⁶ Ktav Yosher, p. 8b.

³⁷Ibid. See 'Rav Tuv Levet Yisra'el' [Great Goodness for the House of Israel], Divrei Shalom Ve'emet, Berlin 1782–1785, p. 39a-b.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 9a: "Vayasem yado 'al yadi."

³⁹ Ibid., p. 8b. See Joseph Perl's Megaleh Tmirin [Revealer of Secrets], Wien 1819; Isaac Erter, 'Gilgul Nefesh' [Transmigration of a Soul], in Hazofeh Levet Yisra'el [Watchman for the House of Israel], Wien 1858, p. 48.

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 10b, 11b.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 12b. Cf. Joseph Perl, Bohen Zadiq [Trying the Righteous], Prague 1838, pp. 118, 120.

and you shall save this honourable, wise and wonderful man [Wessely]".⁴² The narrator's mission is likened to the saving of Israel. Of course, within the context of this satire, the commission by the rabbi serves as a justification for the ostensibly objective narrator to side with Wessely in the controversy. It is further an indication – within the satire – of the rabbi's complete conversion. Thus Berlin's success in his mission to find the truth is underlined within the development of the plot.

It should be pointed out that Perl and Erter exhibit the same literary phenomena in their satiric writings; however, it is by no means limited to satire.⁴³

III. INNER STRUCTURES AND MOTIFS

In spite of the apparent disorder and the chaotic presentation of reality with which a work of satire is generally characterised, 44 the artistic work of satire must have a unified concept of reality as well as a clear point of view or ideology. The satirist-artist is not content with merely attacking his adversaries, out of which attack his Weltanschauung may be deduced by the reader. Neither is he satisfied by the mere assumption that the reader would resort to reversing his ironies in order to find out the underlying message in the satire. The satirist-artist would attempt to convey his truths – all-encompassing truths – throughout his work, using very subtle devices. Those are not merely devices which high-light one technique of the satirist – as I have elaborated upon elsewhere 45 – but there are some underlying concepts which serve as the core of a given artistic work of satire. These concepts nurture the totality of his work which is connected to them and dependent on them.

The title of this satire, *Ktav Yosher*, is of import in this regard. It strikes a number of chords. Berlin employs a phrase used also by Wessely in the second of his series of four pamphlets, *Divrei Shalom Ve'emet*. It is indeed ironic, yet quite meaningful, that a work of satire is called "An Epistle of Righteousness", thus alluding to the nature of the book. It is a further irony that in the final analysis, although Wessely is proven innocent of heresy, the message is that he was not destined "to clear the road" for *Haskalah*. The Definitely, it is the purpose of Saul Berlin to employ this title as an allusion to its biblical origin. It is based on the verse in Ecclesiastes 12:10: "The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even words of truth." The author assumes the role of Qohelet; he "taught the people knowledge" (verse 9) as does the author of Ecclesiastes, and he "set in order many proverbs" [or,

⁴²Ktav Yosher, p. 12b: "ve'atah lech bechohacha zeh vehosha'ta 'et ha'ish hanichbad heḥacham hanifla." Cf. Judges 6:14.

⁴⁸See M. D. Brandstaedter, *Kol Sipurei M. D. Brandstaedter* [The Complete Stories of M.D.B.], I, Krakau 1895, p. 69.

⁴⁴Cf. Kernan, The Cankered Muse, pp. 7-8; same is published in his Modern Satire, p. 167.

⁴⁵ In my study in LBI Year Book XX.

⁴⁶ Wessely, 'Rav Tuv Levet Yisra'el,' Divrei Shalom Ve'emet, on the title page.

⁴⁷ Ktav Yosher, p. 16b.

parables] (ibid.); Ktav Yosher is indeed a parable of Enlightenment, its ideological struggle and its desired success.⁴⁸ But above all, he conveys the idea of "Havel havalim [...] hakol havel" (vanity of vanities [...] all is vanity) (verse 8). It is the notion of scepticism, abundant in the book of Ecclesiastes, that is the hub of this work. The world of stability, of certainty and of one definitive religious truth no longer exists. All events in the story are geared to indicate this metamorphosis. Wessely turns out to be not what he appears to have been; his Divrei Shalom Ve'emet is not as simple as it looks, but is a mystical work of Kabalah; and the religious leader, symbol of the traditional, uncompromising views, does change his outlook about Wessely from one extreme to the other. Words and concepts, which were clear and meaningful till then, not only become ambiguous and ambivalent, but may even reverse their meaning altogether. Thus "heresy" is turned to "the words of a living god", according to the narrator's concept of Kabalah, and derogatory and ugly enunciations about the deity are the exact reverse in the Kabalah, as it is able to contain contradictions.⁴⁹ The logically impossible becomes possible through Kabalah.

The underlying relationship to the book of Ecclesiastes is not only inferred, but is stated openly by the narrator who attempts to equate the methodology employed by King Solomon, the traditionally accepted author of *Qohelet*, with the one allegedly used by Wessely in his controversial book.⁵⁰ The scroll ("Megilah") of *Qohelet* is said to be a work of Kabalah – very much like Wessely's book – and the seven vanities in its first verse refer to exalted and sublime lights. At this point the narrator states that he [too] writes this scroll (Megilah), "written upright, words of truth and peace". This phrase, highlighting in bold type the title of the book, is intended to relate the book of *Qohelet* to *Ktav Yosher*.⁵¹

The critical spirit of *Qohelet* is the spirit of *Ktav Yosher*; it accepts no authority, no God-given, infallible truths, no accepted set of values which are indispensable. Very much like some of the European enlighteners, and like a colleague of his, Isaak Satanow, Saul Berlin introduces scepticism – in the core of his book – as the only sure and stable value in the modern world.⁵² Undoubtedly, it is a paradox; but that is the epitome of Berlin's personality and phenomenon. The paradox is further the very representation of Berlin's concept of the world, a world of paradox, a world in paradox.

One other device which Saul Berlin uses to implement this overall structural theme is foreshadowing; as in the other devices and techniques employed here by the author, it is used in an ironical fashion so as to serve his satirical goals. He does it especially in the first chapter, and mainly in the first paragraph. Two examples will suffice to illustrate this point.

⁴⁸The Hebrew "Mashal" means both proverb and parable. "Qohelet" is the book of Ecclesiastes as well as the author.

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 14a, 13b.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, p. 13a.

⁵¹Ibid., "Katuv Yosher" citing the verse, as different from "Ktav Yosher" the title of the satire.

⁵²See my study 'Isaac Satanow's "Mishlei Asaf" As Reflecting the Ideology of the German Hebrew Haskalah', in Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte, XXV (1973), No. 3, p. 242.

The narrator speaks of "our customary practices which are pleasing to and acceptable by God in heaven".⁵³ This opening remark sets the ironic tone for the whole work, right from the start. For in the following pages Berlin goes on to illustrate what are the customary practices which please God; namely, the many, many superstitions, nonsensical and meaningless activities deemed by the people as religious acts.⁵⁴ This covert ridicule of superstitions turns out to be a leitmotif in *Ktav Yosher*, serving as an ironic unifying element in the story.

Similarly, the narrator expounds in the opening paragraph on the chosenness of the Jewish people, as follows: "We were meritorious to have this honour [of being] a unique nation and a priestly kingdom." ⁵⁵ It has been already observed that this sentence must be read in an ironic tone. It should be construed as a foreshadowing device for Berlin's leitmotif throughout the satire. He keeps repeating the same idea, in a few instances, using language that alludes to his ironic statement in the first paragraph. ⁵⁶ The ironic concept is closely related to the expressed utter contempt for the non-Jews and their culture on the part of the traditional protagonists in this story, and to their concept of themselves. The typology of the melamed and the rabbi, neither of whom is given any personal identity (the only exception is perhaps the narrator), their thinking, their mentality, the contents of their monologues and the validity of what they say, are indeed a continuous play on the assumption that the reader has in mind the repeated ironic statement as to the uniqueness and holiness of the Jewish people.

Berlin uses this technique of foreshadowing in a meaningful way also with regard to his ironic interpretation of Kabalah. Departing from the *melamed*, the narrator speaks of "the depth of things", alluding to the forthcoming elaboration on the Kabalah of which he also speaks in the same terminology. ⁵⁷ Speaking of the rabbi's wisdom, he calls it "deeper than hell", and subsequently demands that each act should be examined "in depth". ⁵⁸ All these enunciations are in preparation for the final, "in-depth" analysis of Wessely's *Divrei Shalom Ve'emet*, and they are scattered throughout the satire as a leitmotif, and as a structural device leading to the crux of the satire.

In addition, Berlin is using two metaphors for the same purpose. The first is the metaphor of "zon", flock, which the narrator employs in reference to the Jewish people. He takes the biblical expression "poor of the flock" (Zechariah 11:7) and reduces it to its literal meaning. Thus the narrator alludes to his attitude towards the people: they are indeed sheep.⁵⁹ The same usage is to be

⁵³ Ktav Yosher, p. 2a: "Hanhagoteinu hanirzot lelodei me'onah."

⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 3b, 4a, 5a, 8a.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 2a. See discussion above in the text related to n. 15.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 2a. See also p. 5a-b: "There is no nation and language [cultural entity] which is crowned with as many innumerable commandments and righteous customs as we are crowned, for we are a kingdom of priests and a holy people"; p. 8a: "We should be happy that we merited to be such a holy people."

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 8b. On the Kabalah as containing "deep, deep things", see p. 11a.

⁵⁸ Ibid. For a similar use see also p. 10a, an example of a mystical interpretation of a biblical verse that is employed as preparation for the general Kabalistic theory of Wessely.

⁵⁹I discussed Berlin's debasement of the sacred idiom at length in my paper in Year Book XX.

found towards the end of the book where Berlin intensifies his intention and attitude by referring to the people of Israel in the traditional term "Zon Qedoshim", a holy flock, which is led by the shepherd each one in his own way. 60 This positive term is based on Ezekiel 36:38. It is a derivation from the flock designated to be sacrificed on the altar before God, and is applied to the holy flock of God. However, in connection with "the poor of the flock", which Berlin employs in the beginning of the satire, flock becomes a leitmotif, and a satiric device, which intensifies Berlin's total attack on and criticism of the Jewish milieu.

Against this negative leitmotif he places a positive one – the metaphor "light". He associates it with Kabalah, and with the teaching of his mystical, Kabalist teacher, "Mori". Once the Kabalistic interpretation of Wessely is accepted, and once Wessely's innocence is acknowledged, light will reign in their dwelling places. ⁶¹ Although there is a twist of irony in his conceptualisation of Kabalah and therefore of this light associated with it, the overall implication is of a positive term related to the light of *Haskalah*. ⁶² A positive aspect of the satiric "Kabalah" is to be found in the figure of the mystical teacher, as discussed below.

IV. STRUGGLE ON BEHALF OF IDEOLOGY

Saul Berlin never intended this work of satire to be merely a defence of Wessely. Indeed, the end result is to some extent a criticism of Wessely who, in Berlin's view, was not intended to carry the torch of Haskalah as was his "teacher". Believing that defence (of Wessely, that is) is the best form of attack, Saul Berlin used his book as a springboard to advocate his enlightenment views concerning contemporary Judaism. He ridicules superstitious beliefs and practices; he derides and criticises the abundance of secondary and trivial religious injunctions and ordinances and the casuistic manner in which they have been deduced; he lampoons the religious teachers and religious education in toto; and he mocks at the Kabalah, especially in its far-fetched interpretation of the sacred texts. To be sure, these four general categories are based on Wessely's discussion in Divrei Shalom Ve'emet. 63 Significantly, these four subjects recur also in the writings of Hebrew Enlightenment of the time. Thus Berlin's work of fiction must be viewed against, and considered as part of the Hebrew Haskalah campaign in its endeavour to introduce changes within Jewish society.

As an author of a work of and for Enlightenment, Berlin does not restrict himself solely to the subjects which were raised by Wessely, but has indeed the

⁶⁰ Ktav Yosher, p. 15b.

⁶¹Ibid., pp. 11a, 12b, 14a, 15b, 16a. Based on Exodus 10:23.

⁶²On the metaphor 'light' and its instrumentality in the Haskalah literature see Yehudah Friedlander, 'Livhinat Mahutah Shel Hametaphorah "Or" Beshirat Hahaskalah Ha'ivrit' [A Probe into the Essence of the Metaphor 'Light' in the Poetry of Hebrew Haskalah], in *Biqoret Ufarshanut*, IV-V (1974), pp. 53-63 [Hebrew].

⁶³Although in a different order and a different emphasis of importance.

whole scope of *Haskalah* and its ideology in mind. Through the satire, and after deciphering the ironies, one should be able to note Berlin's views about Hochmah, human wisdom, as an ultimate authority, ⁶⁴ his anthropocentric concept of God and man, ⁶⁵ his criticism of the rabbis, ⁶⁶ his anti-*Galut* [state of exile] attitude, ⁶⁷ and his allusions on borrowing from Christianity. ⁶⁸ I have dwelled extensively on these themes in Berlin's writings elsewhere. ⁶⁹

Neither did Berlin set himself to the defence of Wessely per se. Quite surprising for a work of defence, Berlin reproaches Wessely for attempting to clear the road of Haskalah of stones when he was neither capable of nor destined for it. 70 A thorough examination of the text in this perplexing phenomenon is rewarding. Using Kabalah terminology, Berlin suggests that Wessely was influenced by "the writings of my teacher the godly Kabalist, the great rabbi, may God protect him and bless him". But Wessely has not fully comprehended the Kabalist and has taken from him only some of his secondary views. The intention of the Kabalist-teacher, according to Berlin, was "to rid the vineyard first of the thorns, and only then to replant the vineyard anew. And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and (only) later will he plant it with the choicest vine." 71 The vine, or the vineyard, are interpreted in the Kabalah as symbols of Kneset Yisra'el [the people of Israel]. 72 Thus that mysterious teacher, called "Mori", my teacher, had in mind, according to the narrator, the re-shaping and re-forming of Judaism and the Jews.

The identity of the teacher who greatly influenced Wessely can be deduced from the text and its context. The narrator speaks of him as being anointed by God with "the holy oil of the purity of idea [—] to examine everything which has been accepted and established, and is careful to do everything according to [the dictates of] time and place". ⁷³ Beneath the metaphors we are confronted here with *Haskalah* terminology which alludes to the ideological association of

⁶⁴Ktav Yosher, pp. 2b, 5b.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 4b.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 7b.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 4b, 5a. There is a very interesting theme which Berlin cites, regarding the suffering of the Jews in exile, which is repeated in modern Hebrew literature by Hayim Hazaz in his story "Hadrashah" [The Sermon], that is, that the Jews who suffered persecutions were in effect desiring them. While Berlin says it tongue-in-cheek, Hazaz' Yudqeh is quite serious about his view.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 16b.

⁶⁹See my article on Saul Berlin cited above in n. 2 ('Hareformah Hadatit' . . .), especially pp. 4-10.

⁷⁰See above n. 47 and related text.

⁷¹Ktav Yosher, pp. 11a, 16b. The activities around the vine are based on Isaiah 5:2. "Mori", my teacher, is the term which Rabbi Ḥayim Vital used to refer to his teacher, Rabbi Isaac Luria, Ha'ari. (See, for exampl e, his 'Eleh Toldot Yizḥaq' [This is the Life story of Isaac], in Sefer Toldot Ha'ari [The Book of the Life story of Ha'ari], Jerusalem 1967, ed. Me'ir Bnayahu, pp. 247 ff. See also pp. 315 ff.)

⁷²Zohar to the Pentateuch, Bereshit, Judah J. Rosenberg's edition, New York (reprinted, Jerusalem 1966–1967), Parashat Vayeḥi, p. 199, to the verse "Oseri Lagefen 'iro . . .": "What is [the] vine? This is Kneset Yisra'el."

⁷⁸Ktav Yosher, p. 12a: "[...] mibal'adei mori 'asher meshaho hashem beshemen qodesh tehor hara'yon, lehavi bechur habhinah kol 'asher yimaze natun lemunah qayam, venoten libo la'asot bechol davar lefi ha'et vehamaqom."

the teacher. Furthermore, in the context of the discussion of the Kabalistteacher, the name of Moshe Rabenu [our master, Moses] is mentioned a number of times; 74 however, only in the last four lines of the book do we get the clear hint: "And see what the Zohar said about Moshe and Messiah, and you shall find out that a man like him was prepared [capable] to clean the road and to clear it of stones." 75 Checking what the Zohar - that work of Jewish mysticism said about Moshe and Messiah is not an easy task, yet is most enlightening. I did find Berlin's allusion in the Zohar in Genesis 49:10; "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until he come to Shiloh." Zohar has it as follows: "Lo yasur shevet mihudah. This is Messiah ben David. Umehogeg miben raglav. This is Messiah ben Yoseph. 'Ad ki yayo shiloh. This is Moshe." For the numerical value of the letters "Shiloh" and "Moshe" are identical. 78 Indeed, it is in the figure of Moshe ben Menahem, Moses Mendelssohn, the teacher of the Hebrew Enlightenment, that Berlin finds the dual representation of Moshe and Messiah; Berlin depicts Moshe Mendelssohn as the modern saviour of his people. The phraseology of clearing the road of stones is applied quite often in the Hebrew Haskalah to express Mendelssohn's Enlightenment efforts.⁷⁷ Berlin relates the "vineyard" metaphor to the metaphor "road", both of which signify Mendelssohn's Haskalah, by using the verb "SaQaL" (clear of stones) in both. By identifying Mendelssohn with the figure of Moshe, Berlin was only following a trend which prevailed among the Hebrew Maskilim.⁷⁸ However, the comparison of Mendelssohn by way of Zohar to Moshe-Messiah is indeed Saul Berlin's contribution to the image of Mendelssohn as seen by the Maskilim. Thus Berlin is saying that Wessely was trying to follow in Mendelssohn's footsteps even though he was not destined to do so. "Only a man of his stature" is capable of such a messianic task.

The image of Moses Mendelssohn as seen by the Hebrew and Jewish *Maskilim* in Germany has been investigated in the past. It is enough to mention here the monumental work of Alexander Altmann on Mendelssohn,⁷⁹ and the insight on

⁷⁴Ktav Yosher, p. 11a, 16 b.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 16b.

⁷⁶Zohar, p. 199. The Zohar's text further alludes to Moshe and his ancestors. It is striking that Berlin's allusion to the vine as being Kneset Yisra'el (n. 72) is to be found right next to this allusion about Moshe.

⁷⁷See my study 'Dmuto Shel Moshe Mendelssohn Kefi Shehi Mishtaqefet Bereshitah Shel Sifrut Hahaskalah Ha'ivrit Begermanyah (*Hame'asef*, 1784–1797)' [The Image of M.M. As Reflected in the Beginning of Hebrew Haskalah Literature in Germany], in *Proceedings of Fifth World Congress of Jewish Studies*, III, Jerusalem 1972, pp. 269–282.

⁷⁸Isaac Euchel uses the expression "the road which he cleared [Hebrew: 'Siqel'] for them" in his biography of M.M., Rabenu Hehacham Moshe Ben Menahem [Our Wise Sage M.B.M.], Berlin 1788, p. 112 [Hebrew]. Berlin uses the same verb: 'ulesaqel hamesilah'. Euchel uses other metaphors and similes of "road" in relation to Mendelssohn's Enlightenment (ibid., pp. 5, 111-113). In Hame'asef the same terminology is used: "This man Moshe cleared the road ['Siqel Hamesilah'], lifted obstacle from the path of his nation, and he showed the right (righteous) way [...] and he said to them behold I cleared the road before you [...]" (Hame'asef, V [1789], p. 188). See also Hame'asef, VI (1790), pp. 57-58.

⁷⁹Alexander Altmann, Moses Mendelssohn. A Biographical Study, University of Alabama-London 1973.

Mendelssohn's role in shaping the German Haskalah as viewed by Barzilay. 80 I made a modest contribution to the understanding of Mendelssohn's image as seen by the Hebrew Maskilim in my Hebrew book on Mendelssohn. 81 A recent article, published in this Year Book, by Lehmann, ought also to be mentioned in this regard. 82 The image of Moses Mendelssohn as a "Moshe-figure" has already been established in the above studies.

It is for the first time, as far as I know, that the figure of Moses Mendelssohn is subtly associated with the image of the Messiah. This new, daring conceptualisation of Moses Mendelssohn could not have been overtly or even covertly delineated lest the orthodox, traditional elements come out with accusations of heresy. Hence the very subtle use of Kabalah, not easily understood, made by the erudite Rabbi Saul Berlin. Berlin's use of Kabalah is partially for satirical purposes, but significantly also for a message of Haskalah by keeping in the background the figure of Moses Mendelssohn as a great teacher to be followed. The unnamed Mendelssohn serves also as a unifying element in this satire, very much like the metaphors discussed previously. His writings, too, serve as an Enlightenment criterion. It adds a serious, meaningful dimension to an artistic, well-constructed and well-presented work of satire, the first of its kind in the early Haskalah literature. Undoubtedly, it is one of the best works in Hebrew letters of its time.

Very skilfully, this satire reflects and preaches the ideology of *Haskalah*. Moreover, *Ktav Yosher* achieved an intensified projection of the spirit of the time. I find it principally in scepticism and in the ambiguity and contradiction, or paradox, which the author conceptualised as the banners of the modern times of Enlightenment. Those are contrasted with the stable, meaningful world of the past. Ironically, Berlin uses the tools of the past, the sacred literature of the Jewish people, the books of *Qohelet* and *Zohar*, to make his satiric comment on Jewish experience.

⁸⁰Isaac 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. 49-55.

⁸¹ Moshe Pelli, Moshe Mendelssohn: Bechavlei Masoret [Moses Mendelssohn: Bonds of Tradition], Tel Aviv 1972, pp. 88–114 [Hebrew]. A version of this chapter appeared as a study cited in n. 77 above.

⁸² James H. Lehmann, 'Maimonides, Mendelssohn and the Me'asfim. Philosophy and the Biographical Imagination in the Early Haskalah', in LBI Year Book XX (1975), pp. 87–108.