

*The Beginning of the Epistolary Genre in Hebrew
Enlightenment Literature in Germany
The Alleged Affinity between Lettres Persanes
and 'Igot Meshulam*

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The age of *Haskalah* is an age of change; thus any study of this period must in effect be a study in change.

The goals of that change, which was advocated by the Hebrew and Jewish *Maskilim* [enlighteners] in the last quarter of the eighteenth century in Germany, were in essence to enlighten the Jews, modernise Judaism, and to revive the Hebrew language and its culture. It was, then, a concerted effort on the part of young Jewish intellectuals to reshape and re-form Judaism and the Jews in accordance with the needs of modern times and the ideals of European Enlightenment.

There were some individual works which advocated a renewed interest in the sciences already in mid-century (such as works by Israel Zamosc and Judah Hurwitz). However, they represent single efforts, though important, to introduce certain moderate changes into Jewish society. The beginning of a group's concerted efforts to reach these goals may be traced to Moses Mendelssohn's early attempts in the 1750s to publish a journal of *Haskalah* [Hebrew Enlightenment] in Hebrew. *Qohelet Musar*, of which two issues only appeared, may signal the early start of *Haskalah* effort in Germany.

However, it was not until the publication of *Hame'asef* in the 1780s that the early intimations achieved fruition. Aware of the changes that have taken place in European Enlightenment literature and culture, a group of young intellectuals set out to remedy the condition of their people. Having faith in themselves and in the dire necessity to alleviate the status of the Jews and their culture, the *Maskilim* used the medium of the written word to advocate their desire for change.

The *Maskilim* utilised all means at their disposal to achieve their goal: through fictional and non-fictional writings; through preaching and teaching, directly and indirectly. They battled on a number of fronts. There was an internal struggle against the traditionalists within Judaism, who vehemently rejected the very idea of introducing modernisation into Judaism and into Jewish education, as a means to achieve the goals of Enlightenment ideology. There was also an external struggle with the opponents of Judaism on the European scene, a struggle which, for the *Maskilim*, was essentially a defence of Judaism.

However, the most painful struggle took place within some of the more sensi-

tive Hebrew writers, each one within himself. An echo of it could be found in some of Isaac Euchel's writings, especially in the most tantalising questions expressed in his fictional work *The Letters of Meshulam*.

In this work, one can find the epitome of the problem of this transition period, as the old and the new intertwined, and as ideas of European Enlightenment penetrated into the Hebrew spheres.

It is this latter subject, which falls under the heading of cultural and literary transformation within the *Haskalah*, that concerns the present study.

A student of the period may note some readiness to accept a priori the notion of a total and most exclusive impact of European Enlightenment on the Hebrew *Haskalah*. Coupled with another erroneous notion of the radical inclinations of all the *Maskilim*, this contention ignores – or at least does not take into consideration – the enormous forces from within Judaism that had their impact on the *Maskilim*.

Being products of traditional Judaism, some of these Hebrew enlighteners were rather moderate in their demands for change, while others, extreme as they were in their inclination, continued to exhibit strong ties with the past. It is for this reason that although *Haskalah* owes very much to the literature and thought of European Enlightenment, one must acknowledge the indebtedness of *Haskalah* and the *Maskilim* to intrinsic Judaic influence. Its reliance on medieval Jewish philosophy must be taken into consideration (although an in-depth study of this aspect of *Haskalah* is indeed wanting). Similarly, one must be aware of its strong resemblance in form, contents and, at times, also in its themes, to the Hebrew literature of the past.

Thus, the study of the exchange of ideas between Judaism and European culture in the modern age may indeed recognise the great impact of the latter on the former. However, it is of utmost significance to note that the ways in which ideas penetrated into Judaic spheres in eighteenth-century Germany and elsewhere were quite complicated. An attempt to trace a single source of influence may prove to be futile, for one must take into account the variety of sources, external as well as internal, that have had any bearing on a given idea.

It is my belief that a greater emphasis must be placed on that material which draws on the inner Jewish experience of a given author.

A case in point is the impact of such a seminal work as Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes* which seems unquestionable; nevertheless, many questions do indeed emerge as to its exclusive influence on Hebrew letters once a thorough probe is conducted.

The following study* purports to deal with this subject, and to serve as a test case for the above considerations.

Some seventy years after the publication of Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes*, *Hame'asef*, a journal intended to promote the Hebrew *Haskalah* movement, carried a series of fictional letters entitled 'The Letters of Meshulam ben 'Uriyah Ha'eshtemo'i'. These letters, which were written by the Hebrew *Maskil* Isaac

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Euchel, constituted the first writing in its genre – the literary epistolary genre – in Modern Hebrew *belles lettres*.¹

Hebrew literary scholarship has assumed an affinity between Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes* and Euchel's 'Letters of Meshulam'; the alleged dependence of the Hebrew work on its French predecessor has not, however, been demonstrated from a thorough analysis of the two texts themselves. Historians of Hebrew literature, noting a few superficial similarities between the two works, have concluded too hastily that Euchel's epistolary work is indebted to *Lettres Persanes*;² they neither discuss the nature of these similarities nor offer detailed proof of Euchel's alleged indebtedness to Montesquieu. It is not surprising then, that Sha'an'an, for example, confronting the many striking dissimilarities, contents himself with stating that Euchel has not always comprehended the pungency of the Frenchman's irony. Whereas Montesquieu, he writes, ridiculed Christian Europe intentionally through the naïve, admiring Moslem, the Hebrew *Maskil*

¹*Igrot Meshulam ben 'Uriyah Ha'eshtemo'i, Hame'asef*, VI (1790), pp. 38–50, 80, 85, 171–176, 245–249, published anonymously. A list of Euchel's publications and some biographical data – apparently supplied by Euchel himself – were published by V. H. Schmidt and D. G. Mehring, *Neuestes Gelehrtes Berlin*, I, Berlin 1795, pp. 116–117. Among his publications Euchel lists the letters of the oriental travellers. A brief summary of the contents of *'Igrot Meshulam* is included in the second part of my study of Euchel, 'Isaac Euchel: Tradition and Change in the First Generation Haskalah Literature in Germany', *Journal of Jewish Studies*, XXVI, No. 1–2 (Spring–Autumn 1975), pp. 151–167; part two, vol. XXVII, No. 1 (Spring 1976), pp. 54–70. A bibliography on Euchel appears in that study, part one, pp. 151–152. This study is incorporated as chapter X in my book *The Age of Haskalah*, Leiden 1979. A general discussion of Euchel and his work appears also in my article 'Jewish Identity in Modern Hebrew Literature', *Judaism*, XXV, No. 4 (Fall 1976), pp. 448–452.

²Avraham Sha'an'an, *'Iyunim Besifrut Hahaskalah* (Studies in the Literature of Haskalah), Merhavyah, Israel 1952, pp. 75–80, and in his *Hasifrut Ha'ivrit Ha'hadashah Lizramah* (Currents in Modern Hebrew Literature), I, Tel-Aviv 1962), pp. 75–77. Joseph Klausner, *Historyah Shel Hasifrut Ha'ivrit Ha'hadashah* (History of Modern Hebrew Literature), I, Jerusalem 1960³, p. 161: "It makes an impression as though it is an imitation of *Lettres Persanes*." Gedalyah Elkoshi, in his articles on Euchel in the *Hebrew Encyclopaedia*, II, Jerusalem 1957, p. 815, and the translated version published in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, VI, Jerusalem 1971, p. 957, also suggests that Euchel imitated Montesquieu: "[. . .] and which seemed in some respects to imitate Montesquieu's *Persian Letters*." The Hebrew version has it: "[. . .] which contain signs of imitation of the *Persian Letters*." G. Kressel writes that *'Igrot Meshulam* "are patterned after Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes* (*Cyclopedia of Modern Hebrew Literature*, I, Merhavyah, Israel 1965, p. 89 [Hebrew]) Werses is more careful in his observation; he relates *'Igrot Meshulam* to "this kind of 'Persian Letters' and their transformation in German literature" (Shmuel Werses, *Sipur Veshorsho* [Story and Source], Giv'atayim, Israel 1971, p. 11).

In a more recent and more elaborate study, Sha'an'an virtually reiterates his contention of a direct influence of *Lettres Persanes* on *'Igrot Meshulam*, although, at times, he would refer to "Montesquieu and others". See his study 'The Letters of Meshulam as Symptom and Genre', *Baruch Kurzweil Memorial Volume*, Tel-Aviv – Ramat Gan 1975 [Hebrew], pp. 355, 356, 363, 364, 366, 368, 369.

In another article which appeared recently, Morris Neiman refers to Euchel's work as "A Hebrew Imitation of Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes*". See his article bearing that title in *Jewish Social Studies*, XXXVII, No. 2 (Spring 1975), pp. 163–169. Neiman reiterates some of the superficial analogies between the two works, cited already in Sha'an'an's *'Iyunim*, and adds a few other cursory similarities without even the slightest attempt to analyse the alleged analogies. Following the completion of the article I received Yehuda Friedlander's excellent essay, 'The Beginning of Satire. Isaac Euchel's "'Igrot Meshulam ben 'Uriyah Ha'eshtemo'i"', published in *Moznayim*, XLIV, No. 2 (January 1977), pp. 107–118 [Hebrew]. Friedlander accepts Sha'an'an's affinity theory without reservation.

saw in Europe the seat of wisdom, which should be transplanted into Judaism; thus Euchel emphasised the enlightenment of Europe rather than its darker sides.³

According to this view, Euchel is portrayed as insensitive to the satire and irony of *Lettres Persanes*, and to its criticism of the social, cultural and religious institutions and customs of Europe. He is considered to have accepted the literal meaning of the French text, and to have made it the model of his own epistolary work.

Plainly, then, Euchel and his work deserve better and more detailed attention than they have thus far received. One of the very first Hebrew writers of the German *Haskalah* and one of its dominant figures, Isaac Euchel (1756–1804) appeared at the outset of the movement in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. In his personality and his literary and public activities, Euchel may signify many of the cultural changes that took place within the Hebrew intelligentsia in Germany.

As one of the major spokesmen of Hebrew *Haskalah* in Germany, Euchel initiated the first regular Hebrew journal, *Hame'asef*, in 1783, and thus established the enlightenment vehicle for introducing changes into German and European Jewry. He served as its editor for a number of years, contributing articles and creative work continuously even after he had ceased to be editor. Concurrently he established a society of Hebraists, *Heurat Dorshei Leshon 'Ever* (The Society of the Seekers, or Friends, of the Hebrew Language). This kind of public activity was coupled in the following decade with the establishment of the *Gesellschaft der Freunde*, of which society he was the director from 1797 to 1801.

A follower of Moses Mendelssohn and an apparent student of his, Euchel composed the first book-long biography in Hebrew letters on his admired teacher. Reflecting the attitude of the Hebrew *Maskilim* towards “the Socrates of our time”, as they referred to Mendelssohn, this glorifying biography was first serialised in *Hame'asef*, in 1788, and subsequently published as a book.

Among his other contributions, Euchel is credited with the introduction of some European literary genres into Hebrew literature. He wrote the first modern satire, thus utilising the prevalent European genre of the fictional epistolary writing for this purpose. It is *The Letters of Meshulam*, discussed below.

Typically, Euchel's *Haskalah* interests fluctuate between the secular and the sacred in this period of transition. Is there any wonder that he undertook upon himself to translate the traditional prayerbook into German? The *Gebete* (1786), being the first translation into German by a Hebrew writer in modern times (Friedländer published his translation in the same year), highlights the dual nature of Hebrew *Haskalah*, looking both internally as well as externally.

Exemplifying another aspect of the dual nature of Hebrew *Haskalah* is Euchel's contribution to Yiddish literature. He is considered to be the writer of the first modern Yiddish play, *Reb Henoch; oder Was thut men damit*. Clearly, then, the impact of European Enlightenment ideology on such a major writer of *Haskalah* should be thoroughly probed.⁴ Such study may shed light on the dissemination

³*Iyunim*, p. 77; ‘The Letters of Meshullam as Symptom’, p. 356.

⁴A detailed analysis of his contribution to Hebrew *Haskalah* appears in my study ‘Isaac Euchel: Tradition and Change’ cited in note 1 above.

of Enlightenment ideas in German Hebrew spheres in general, and may indeed give us a better understanding of Hebrew *Haskalah*.

In this paper I shall first examine the hypothesis of the alleged dependence of 'Igrot Meshulam solely upon Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes*. In so doing, I shall not only resort to similarities promulgated by the exponents of this hypothesis, but will attempt to scrutinise the subject by referring to additional similarities not mentioned previously.

My working assumption is that in spite of the apparent impact of Montesquieu's satiric work on Euchel, it is incumbent upon the student of *Haskalah* literature and intellectual history of the Enlightenment to investigate the whole gamut of the epistolary literature in Europe at the time. Only through a thorough probe into the genre would we be able to ascertain the affinity between 'Igrot Meshulam and *Lettres Persanes*.

Due to the enormous scope of such an undertaking which far exceeds the limitations of a single paper, I have selected a number of representative works in the epistolary, pseudo-oriental genre, and attempted to check whether the alleged similarities could be found in these works as well.

As I have selected works published prior to 1721 – the publication date of *Lettres Persanes* – as well as works published subsequently, the exclusive dependence of 'Igrot Meshulam on Montesquieu has thus been questioned.

Following this examination, I purport to show that a study of the impact of European cultural milieu and Enlightenment literature on Hebrew *Haskalah* must take into account intrinsic factors as well. In this particular case of alleged literary affinity between a work in Hebrew and its counterpart in European literature, I shall show that a more significant impact will be found internally. Of importance is that 'Igrot Meshulam is better understood when studied against Euchel's previous writings, *vis-à-vis* Euchel's own experience within the Jewish spheres.

We may study the alleged dependence of Euchel upon Montesquieu in terms of four categories of apparent similarities and one category of dissimilarities between their respective works.

A. The first category comprises those similarities which result from the epistolary genre itself. The very form of epistolary writing necessitates certain literary devices; however, since most are generally found in other such works, they may not be taken as conclusive evidence of the influence of the French on the Hebrew work. One such device is the introduction of the fictional publisher, or editor, of the letters; this is found in both works. However, it is commonly used in other epistolary writings such as the *Turkish Spy*, *Letters from the Dead to the Living* and *Memoirs of the Twentieth Century*,⁵ and hence may not be cited as evidence of Euchel's dependence upon Montesquieu.

⁵'Introduction', *Lettres Persanes, Oeuvres Complètes de Montesquieu*, I, Paris 1875, pp. 51–53; 'Igrot Meshulam, pp. 38–39. Sha'anani, 'Iyunim, p. 77, cites the epistolary form as "reminiscent of Montesquieu's invention" (cf. G. L. Van Roosbroeck, *Persian Letters Before Montesquieu*, New York 1972).

In order to substantiate our contention, a number of representative works in the epistolary,

Similarly, the treatment of the letters as translations from an oriental into a European language: this literary convention of pseudo-translation, too, is to be found in both works, as, indeed, in others of the genre.⁶ Another technique frequently employed in such writings is the inclusion of stories within the letters.⁷ The “foreign observer”, too, is conventional in these writings, so that use of this feature does not constitute proof of direct borrowing from *Lettres Persanes*.⁸ The genre naturally also has features in common with the travelogue and hence some inherent similarities.

B. The second category includes certain ideas and topics apparently common both to *Lettres Persanes* and *Igrot Meshulam*. Spaniards, for example, are similarly characterised in both works: they are described as phlegmatic, lazy, having an aversion to work and extremely proud. In addition, the Spanish Inquisition is

pseudo-oriental genre, published before 1721 – the publication year of *Lettres Persanes* – and following that year, were examined. See Thomas Brown, *Letters from the Dead to the Living*, 3rd edn., London 1703, preface, p. 3 (my pagination); Giovanni P. Marana, *The Eight Volumes of Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy*, 18th edn., London 1707, vol. I, ‘To the Reader’, pp. 1–2; Cf. Arthur J. Weitzman, ed., ‘Introduction’, *Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy*, New York 1970, pp. viii, x; Daniel Defoe, *A Continuation of Letters Written by a Turkish Spy at Paris*, London 1718, preface, pp. iii–viii; Samuel Madden, *Memoirs of the Twentieth Century*, London 1733, preface, pp. 18–22; George L. Lyttelton, *Letters from a Persian in England to His Friend at Ispahan*, 4th edn., London 1735, vol. I, p. v, ‘To the Bookseller’; Lyttelton, *The Persian Letters* (vol. II of *Letters from a Persian*), London 1735, p. iii.

It should be pointed out that some of the topics compared in these categories were suggested by the Hebrew critics while others are offered in this paper for the purpose of checking any possible connection between the French and Hebrew works.

⁶‘Introduction’, *Lettres Persanes*, p. 52; *Igrot Meshulam*, pp. 38–39. See also Brown, *Letters from the Dead*, preface, p. 4 (my pagination); Marana, *Turkish Spy*, vol. I, ‘To the Reader’, p. 3 (my pagination); cf. Weitzman, ‘Introduction’, *Turkish Spy* (1970), p. viii; Defoe, *A Continuation of Letters*, preface, pp. iii–viii; Madden, *Memoirs*, p. 22 (“translating” the twentieth-century English into eighteenth-century English); Lyttelton, *Letters from a Persian*, p. v; Lyttelton, *The Persian Letters*, ‘The Translator’s Preface’, p. iii.

⁷*Lettres Persanes*: Letters 11–14: The story of the Troglodytes; Letter 141: The story of Zuleima; Letter 142: A mythological story; *Igrot Meshulam* has the story of the expulsion of the Jews from Spain (pp. 81–83), and the story of Don Joseph Pichon (pp. 101–102).

See also: Defoe, *A Continuation*, pp. 34–35: The story of the merchant of Rochel and the skull; pp. 40–41: The story of the woman pope; p. 249: The story of Atlantis; Madden, *Memoirs*, pp. 101–128: A catalogue of relics; Lyttelton, *Letters from a Persian*, pp. 18–25: The love of Ludovic and Honoria; pp. 81–117: The story of Polydore and Emilia; Marquis d’Argens, *The Jewish Spy*, 3rd edn., London, 1766, vol. I, pp. 22–23: The story of the Carmelite father Ange; pp. 52–54: The story of the priest who was canonised through a miracle performed at his grave; pp. 134–140: A letter within a letter; Oliver Goldsmith, *The Citizen of the World*, in *Persian and Chinese Letters*, Universal Classics Library, Washington – London 1901; published in 1762, pp. 360–364: The story of Catharina; pp. 382–385: The story of the princess and her two daughters.

⁸Cf. Van Roosbroeck, *Persian Letters Before Montesquieu*, pp. 22 ff., 40, 41 ff.; and Newell Richard Bush, *The Marquis d’Argens and his Philosophical Correspondence*, Ann Arbor 1953, p. 52. Once the foreign observer has become a literary convention, one notes an attempt on the part of the editor-publisher to authenticate his use of the foreign observer figure. Lyttelton, in his introduction ‘To the Bookseller’, in *Letters from a Persian*, p. v, writes; “I am aware that some People may suspect that the Character of a *Persian* is *Fictitious*, as many such Counterfeits have appear’d both in France and England. But whoever reads them with Attention, will be convinc’d, that they are certainly the Work of a perfect Stranger. The Observations are so *Foreign* and *out of the Way*, such *remote Hints* and *imperfect Notions* are taken up, *our present Happy Condition* is in all Respect *so ill understood*, that it is hardly possible any *Englishman* shou’d be the Author.”

cited in both works as cruel, and Spanish religious institutions as extremely intolerant. This is referred to as a conclusive proof of affinity by some scholars. Euchel, however, certainly did not have to resort to *Lettres Persanes* for information on the cruelty of the Inquisition and on Spanish intolerance; nor, for that matter, did he necessarily draw from Montesquieu his clichés about the Spanish character. This material is readily available in the epistolary writings,⁹ to say nothing of works of other kinds available to Euchel.

Again, both writers depict their oriental protagonists as prompted to undertake their respective European journeys by their desire to acquire knowledge, and to probe the strange customs of Europe. As a result of their encounters with an alien culture and religion, both Usbek and Meshulam are made to voice doubts concerning their own religious practices. "I have doubts", Usbek writes to the "servant of the prophets", "I must trace them down". Thus the dependence of Euchel's work on Montesquieu's is alleged.¹⁰ Significantly, however, the urge for knowledge and voicing of scepticism are in no way unique to *Lettres Persanes*, or to *The Letters of Meshulam*. They abound in the epistolary literature which I studied, such as the *Turkish Spy*, *The Jewish Spy* and *The Citizen of the World*.¹¹

⁹*Lettres Persanes*, lxxviii, pp. 258–263; *Igrot Meshulam*, p. 174. The cliché of the Spaniards being extremely proud is used in other writings. See, for example, Marana, *The Second Volume of Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy*, 18th edn., London 1707, book III, letter xxvi, p. 244: "The Spaniards, are the Proudest People in the World"; and *The Jewish Spy*, I, xxxvii, p. 279. The treatment by both Montesquieu and Euchel of the Inquisition is cited by Sha'anani (*'Iyunim*, p. 78) and Neiman ('A Hebrew Imitation', p. 166) as linking the two authors.

The intolerance and cruelty of the Inquisition in the Vatican and in Spain are highlighted in many such writings. See, for example, Defoe, *A Continuation of Letters*, pp. 6, 19, 56, 271; *The Jewish Spy*, I, p. 56 ("That Inquisition which thirsteth after the Blood of Israel"), p. 176.

¹⁰*Lettres Persanes*, xvii, p. 93; on his desire to acquire knowledge see letter i, p. 54. In *Igrot Meshulam* see p. 39 (his goal: acquisition of knowledge, and learning other peoples' cultures, customs and opinions), and pp. 40, 44, 45 (Meshulam's scepticism). Cf. Paulina Kra, 'The Invisible Chain of the *Lettres Persanes*', *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, xxiii, Geneva 1963, pp. 23–24. The desire to acquire knowledge is cited by Sha'anani (*'Iyunim*, p. 77) and Neiman ('A Hebrew Imitation', p. 164) as a proof of resemblance of the French and Hebrew works.

¹¹While the mission of the "spy" in the spy series (such as *The Turkish Spy*, and *A Continuation of Letters*) is understandably the acquisition of knowledge, the foreign observer stories have it, too. See, for example, Lyttelton, *Letters from a Persian*, pp. 1–2: Selim writes to Mirza that since Usbek (of *Lettres Persanes*) had not provided them with a first-hand report on England, he has "an ardent Desire to know the rest" of the places; he is thus going on this trip so "that I might be able to gratify thy Thirst of Knowledge". Similarly, Aaron Monceca, in *The Jewish Spy*, is "being resolved to see every Thing with my own Eyes" (vol. I, p. 29). And Lien Chi Altangi, in his first letter, advises his correspondent: "I begin to learn somewhat of their manners and customs" (*The Citizen of the World*, i, p. 295). As to the special interest of the foreign observer in "manners and customs" see note 55 below.

Scepticism develops gradually by foreign observers as they begin to realise the relativity of all religions. Upon comparing religious dogmas and practices with their own, they discern some positive aspects of the foreign religion as well as some negative aspects of their own religious principles and practices. One necessary step in the road to scepticism is the realisation on the part of the observer that each religion claims it alone possesses truth, and that believers of all other religions are destined to damnation. Thus the Turkish spy finds some positive aspects in Christianity: some precepts in Christianity, if truly observed, are no less holy than those in Islam. "As for me," he writes, "I begin really to think, That there may be *Saints* amongst the *Christians*, as there are amongst *Us*." Following that, he dwells on the relative nature of religious truth: "They have one *Article* that puzzles me. They affirm, There is but one Truth, so that we

God's love for humanity and the corollary obligation on the part of men to love one another are also recurrent themes in both works, cited as proof of affinity. Yet these are not uniquely Montesquieu's ideas, nor Euchel's, for they are to be found in other Enlightenment writings.¹² That the ordinances of religion ought to be of benefit to all mankind is also stressed in both works. However, this notion, too, is to be found in the writings of the Enlightenment.¹³

The figure of the ultra-orthodox Moslem Mulla may be thought to be paralleled by that of Meshulam's grandfather. Their religious mentality is very much alike, and their manner of proving the authenticity of given Islamic and Jewish

are lost, if we are not *Christians*, or they are damned, if they are not *Mahometans*" (*The Turkish Spy*, vol. I, book I, letter xi, p. 27). In *The Jewish Spy*, however, it appears that the Jewish writers are possessed by scepticism from the outset, and it did not result directly from their travels and from their experience in comparative religion.

¹²*Lettres Persanes*, xlvi, pp. 464–466; lxix, pp. 239–242; 'Igot Meshulam, pp. 48–49. Cf. Neiman's allegation of resemblance of the two works on account of the similarity in discussion of "the ideal of 'love for fellow man'" ('A Hebrew Imitation', p. 167). In the Enlightenment literature, see, for example, the five principles of Natural Religion in Herbert of Cherbury, *The Antient Religion of the Gentiles*, London 1705, pp. 3–4, and cf. Charles Blount's version in his *Religio Laici*, London 1683, pp. 49–50; J. J. Rousseau, 'Profession de Foi du Vicaire Savoyard', *Œuvres Complètes de J. J. Rousseau*, I, Paris 1852, pp. 590–591.

These notions are to be found also in the epistolary literature. See, for example, the Turkish spy's characterisation of Islam as love, and his rejecting the Christian damnation of the non-believers, in Defoe's *A Continuation of Letters*, p. 21. The Chinese writer characterises the "Divine Being" as held by the Persians as "wise and just, and such as all those ought to have who don't suffer themselves to be blinded either by Prejudices, or by Sophistry of their own forming" (Marquis d'Argens, *Chinese Letters*, London 1741, p. 196). The Jewish writer depicts God's attributes as goodness and justice (*The Jewish Spy*, I, letter xxxvi, p. 263). Worship, according to him, was handed down for man's happiness and not for his destruction; it is inconceivable that God should create men in order that they may be damned (pp. 268–269).

¹³*Lettres Persanes*, xlvi, pp. 464–466; lxix, pp. 239–242; 'Igot Meshulam, p. 48. In addition to the sources cited in note 11, see also Matthew Tindal, *Christianity as Old as the Creation*, London 1730, pp. 31–49.

The Turkish spy writes to Bedredin, "Superiour of the Convent of Dervises": "But dost thou not believe, thou, who art a *Dervis*, the most illuminated, That a Man, of what Religion soever he be, provided he be a good Man, may be happy after his Death? Tell me, I pray thee, thy Opinion herein; it is a Point very important to be decided" (*Turkish Spy*, vol. I, book I, letter xi, p. 27). Aaron Monceca writes to Isaac Onis, "a Rabbi at Constantinople", regarding the ceremonies: "Ceremonies ought to be observed when it may be done without risking one's Life, and the Lives of a thousand Innocents; but when there is such evident Danger impending, the Use thereof may be suspended. It is not the same Thing as to the Substance of Religion, from which nothing can nor ought to excuse us" (*The Jewish Spy*, I, letter xxiv, pp. 175–176). He further writes that precepts were abolished in the past so as to facilitate the survival of the Jews. Thus Spanish Jews, namely, the Marranos, who are not observing circumcision, "at this Day", fearing for their safety, are justified (p. 176).

It should be pointed out that Meshulam, too, is very appreciative of the Marranos in their desire to adhere to the fundamentals of Judaism, while discarding the precepts the observance of which may endanger their lives. In his sympathy for the Marranos, and his emphasis on "the worship of the heart which is fundamental" ('Igot Meshulam, p. 44), Euchel comes close to the views expressed in *The Jewish Spy* underlying which are some tenets of Judaism and deism. The similarity between deism and Judaism is being stressed in *The Jewish Spy* (vol. I, pp. 27–28; and cf. the Index, Letter D, "Deists of France", no pagination, where the idea is put forth overtly: "*Deists of France*, skilfully painted under the character of *Jews*"). For more discussion of the Marranos see also p. 28. The similarity between *The Jewish Spy* and 'Igot Meshulam points to a common source, i.e., the Jewish code.

ordinances and laws, respectively, is very similar.¹⁴ But as such techniques are generally adopted by authors when, in satire, they present the figures of orthodox persons in a pseudo-authentic way, or make use of their religious naïveté,¹⁵ the dependence of the one work upon the other is not conclusively established.

The two protagonists' similar interest in history, and more importantly their special interest in historical processes, while points of resemblance, are not necessarily evidence of influence, as asserted, since the same features are found in other works as well.¹⁶ Again, although the protagonists of both works pass through Smyrna¹⁷ and Livorno (Leghorn), many other locales do not correspond in the two works.

Thus, although there are various similarities between *Lettres Persanes* and 'Igot Meshulam, these similarities are superficial only. In addition, the cited similarities abound in epistolary literature written both before and after Montesquieu. Some of the items are found also in Enlightenment literature of other kinds. It follows, then, that we have found no convincing evidence of influence by the French upon the Hebrew work in terms of ideas and topics treated.

C. Our third category consists of themes which, though found in both *Lettres Persanes* and 'Igot Meshulam, are accorded antithetical treatment in these works. This material, like that of the other categories, is also to be found in other writings of the period.

While women's freedom is satirised by the French writer, Euchel is full of praise for the social role of European women, and for the degree of freedom they have won. In spite of the obvious dissimilarities in this topic, advocates of affinity bring it as support for their contention.¹⁸ Understandably, Euchel's purpose in such praise is to suggest that the Jewish people adopt this new attitude towards women and thus modernise Jewish social life. As a *Maskil*, his aim is to reform Jewish life, to model its society, religion and culture on the lines of their European counterparts.

¹⁴*Lettres Persanes*, xvi, pp. 91–92; xviii, pp. 95–97; xxxix, pp. 150–152; 'Igot Meshulam, pp. 46–47. See also note 64 below.

¹⁵See, for example, the *Turkish Spy*, vol. I, book I, letter ix, pp. 17–20; and *A Continuation of Letters*, p. 3.

¹⁶*Lettres Persanes*, cxxxvi, pp. 422–424; 'Igot Meshulam, pp. 81–83, 171–172. Sha'anán ('*Iyunim*, p. 79) stresses some similarity in the protagonists' interest in history books. An interest in contemporary historical trends is indeed very much the business of the "spy". See, for instance, in *A Continuation of Letters*, a description of the fall of the English king (pp. 12–17) and the war between France and Germany (pp. 22–27). There is, however, also an interest in past history: the history of the Arab nation and its culture (pp. 126–131). The Jewish spy, discussing the writing of history, criticises several history books (*The Jewish Spy*, I, pp. 286), and mentions sources that may be used for the writing of history (p. 285).

¹⁷Both Sha'anán ('*Iyunim*, pp. 77–78; *Hasifrut Ha'ivrit*, I, p. 76) and Neiman ('A Hebrew Imitation', p. 168) emphasise the resemblance in locale between Montesquieu and Euchel. Similarity in locale is found also in the studied epistolary literature. Aaron Monceca, too, passes through Smyrna (*The Jewish Spy*, I, p. 13). See also note 44 below.

¹⁸*Lettres Persanes*, xxvi, pp. 115–118; xxxviii, pp. 147–149; lii, pp. 186–188; 'Igot Meshulam, pp. 84–85, 175. The discussion of European women, while differently treated by Montesquieu and Euchel, is nevertheless mentioned by Sha'anán ('*Iyunim*, p. 78; *Hasifrut Ha'ivrit*, I, p. 76) and by Neiman ('A Hebrew Imitation', p. 168) as correlating the French and the Hebrew works.

Significantly, the topic of women is dealt with in the epistolary literature – such as the *Chinese Letters* and *The Jewish Spy* – in various ways.¹⁹ In terms of this topic then, there is no real similarity between *Lettres Persanes* and *Igrot Meshulam*.

Again, unlike the Persians who seem to ridicule French literature and French libraries, Meshulam is depicted as appreciative of Western literature and libraries. This interest in libraries and in literature is cited as a convincing similarity between Montesquieu and Euchel, although each treats the subject matter differently. Yet an interest in libraries and literature is in no way unique to Montesquieu; it is found elsewhere in the epistolary literature, for example, in *The Jewish Spy*.²⁰ In order to understand Euchel's motives, one must bear in mind the state of Hebrew literature at the time and the lack of public libraries devoted to Judaica. Nor is it surprising that when Meshulam compares Arabic poetry, and the Hebrew poetry which is modelled upon Arabic poetry, with Italian poetry and its translation into Hebrew, he finds the latter worthy of much praise.²¹ To Euchel, European literature is the model for Hebrew literature to adopt.

Both works pay much attention to customs and social practices. However, while Montesquieu's intention is to satirise them, Euchel extols such customs, which he hoped to introduce into Judaism. Similarly, the French writer is critical of religious ceremonies whereas Euchel is highly respectful of them. We must add, however, that an interest in European customs and practices on the part of the foreign observer is at the core of all such writings, such as *The Turkish Spy*, *Letters from a Persian* and *The Jewish Spy*.²²

Of a different kind are Usbek's comments regarding the benefits to the state from the citizens who profess a minority religion. These people, according to his way of thinking, hope to advance socially and materially, and thus they are quite beneficial to the state.²³ Behind this notion is the theory that religious

¹⁹Cf. Weitzman's introduction to his edition of the *Turkish Spy*, p. xii. Women, in general, become an object of the foreign observer's interest. The Chinese depicts their customs, costumes and make-up (*Chinese Letters*, pp. 7–10). He is able to compare the liberty given to women by the Europeans with the strict attitude of the Persians toward their women only to conclude that the Chinese treat their women moderately (p. 98). To the Jewish writer in *The Jewish Spy*, Jewish women are the example of chastity unlike Christian, European women (vol. I, pp. 3–5). He describes, tongue in cheek, the liberty of women in Italy – which Euchel praises so much (see note 18) – as follows: "This Liberty which the Women have at Genoa, renders Society amiable and charming. There is not a City in Italy where a Traveller and a Foreigner may pass their Time more agreeably" (letter xxxiv, p. 251).

I do not know whether Euchel read or used *The Jewish Spy*. He could have read the German translation, by Friedrich Nicolai, *Jüdische Briefe*, which was published in Berlin in 1764–1766. Whatever his sources were, he clearly utilised the material in a way that served his purpose, namely, advocating the liberation of Jewish women.

²⁰*Lettres Persanes*, cxxxiii–cxxxvii, pp. 414–427; *Igrot Meshulam*, pp. 44, 46, 174. Cf. *The Jewish Spy*, I, letter xiii, pp. 85–92 (public libraries in Paris); and criticism of literature (pp. 255–262). The influence of Montesquieu on Euchel regarding Meshulam's visit to a library is cited by Sha'anani ('*Iyunim*, p. 79; *Hasi'frut Ha'ivrit*, I, p. 77; 'The Letters of Meshulam as Symptom', p. 363) and by Neiman ('A Hebrew Imitation', p. 169); Sha'anani also adds Meshulam's interest in "literary subjects" as another likeness between Montesquieu and Euchel.

²¹*Igrot Meshulam*, pp. 176, 245–249. Cf. A critical appreciation of a Turkish poet, Achmet Chelibi, as "extravagant" and "monstrous" in *The Jewish Spy*, I, p. 192.

²²See note 11 above, and note 55 below.

²³*Lettres Persanes*, lxxxv, pp. 278–281.

pluralism and religious tolerance are actually beneficial to the state. Euchel also cites the material ambitions of members of a minority group, but does so in order to wage an all-out attack on the conceited Jews of his time.²⁴ As we shall see, he does this in the course of an historical analysis of the rise and fall of Spanish Jewry. Euchel thus reverses the treatment of a topic found also in *Lettres Persanes*. In this instance he turns an approved attitude into a disapproved one. And this technique serves his purpose very well indeed. As in the other cases, European Enlightenment literature in general stresses the idea of religious pluralism and religious tolerance.²⁵

Another change is found in the use made of questions. Usbek addresses various questions in his letters to his correspondents in Persia, and he receives answers to his questions. These questions are intended to arouse interest, to create expectations and tension, and to form some continuity in the novel.²⁶ Meshulam, however, asks rhetorical questions for which he receives no answers. Perhaps Euchel planned to have these questions answered in subsequent letters that were not published, or which may never have been written. As they now appear, these questions are purely rhetorical: they are intended to allude to Euchel's views on important matters on which he did not dare to express his opinion openly.

The nature of the questions is manifested in the following example: "I did not know," Meshulam writes, "whether these things were truthful (correct), for according to my thinking the success (happiness) of the Israelites is in the observance of the *mitzvot* (religious commandments) alone, and if it were possible to have well-being and to be happy without observance of the *mitzvot* would not Socrates the Greek and Zoroaster the Hindu have as much well-being and be as happy as any Israelite? – Let me know, my brother, your view in this investigation."²⁷

Meshulam is here asking one of the most important questions concerning the Jews in the modern age: Is it possible for the Jew to be happy and complete without observance of the religious commandments? In other words, how would

²⁴*Igrot Meshulam*, pp. 81–83, 172–173.

²⁵On the necessity of religious pluralism, see Voltaire, *Letters Concerning the English Nation*, London 1733, letter vi, 'On the Presbyterians', p. 45: "If one religion only were allowed in England, the government would very possibly become arbitrary; if there were but two, the people would cut one another's throats; but as there are such a multitude, they all live happy and in peace." The Index has it clearly stated: "*Religions*, (Plurality of) these very necessary, and of Advantage to the Happiness and Prosperity of the English" (unpaginated). Yet no one should suspect Voltaire of acknowledging religious tolerance in England. In effect, letter v, 'On the Church of England', spells it out: "England is properly the country of sectarists [. . .] *Nevertheless*, tho' every one is permitted to serve God in whatever mode or fashion he thinks proper, yet their true religion, that in which a man makes his fortune, is the sect of Episcopians or Churchmen, call'd the Church of *England* [. . .] No person can possess an employment either in *England* or *Ireland*, unless he be rank'd among the faithful" (pp. 34–35).

Harcourt Brown points out that the first quotation from Voltaire (p. 45) was written originally in English; see his article 'The Composition of the *Letters Concerning the English Nation*', *The Age of the Enlightenment*, Studies Presented to T. Besterman, St. Andrews University Publications No. LVII, Edinburgh 1967, p. 22.

²⁶*Lettres Persanes*, xvi, pp. 91–92; xviii, pp. 95–97.

²⁷*Igrot Meshulam*, p. 44.

a Jew retain his identity as a Jew while attempting to adopt the non-religious aspects of European culture? Considering Euchel's other writings and the *Weltanschauung* of Hebrew Enlightenment, I believe that Euchel's intention is to point out that indeed a non-observant Jew could be as happy as any one else.²⁸ Finally, it may be pointed out that the technique of the rhetorical question is used frequently in epistolary literature.²⁹

D. Our fourth category includes themes which, though common to both works, have a uniquely Jewish slant in Euchel's. In most such cases Euchel attaches a meaningful Jewish touch, or a Jewish colouring, to the matter in hand. In both works, for example, the oriental protagonists are aware of European clothes, and are sensitive about their own strange attire. They conclude that although their exotic attire serves as a topic of conversation, it constitutes in effect a hindrance to their attempt to learn the truth about Europe.³⁰ Euchel goes further: the changing of clothes is seen as a symbolic act which transcends the meaning given it in the French work or in such a story as *The Turkish Spy*.³¹ Meshulam, changing his oriental dress, is taking the first step in the adoption of European culture. Whether or not one is permitted by Jewish law to adopt European dress is a focal point of discussion among the protagonists representing the various segments of Judaism in the *Letters of Meshulam*.³²

²⁸See my article on Euchel cited in note 1.

²⁹The technique of the question is frequently used in the epistolary literature. The Turkish spy asks questions (see the question in quotation, note 13 above), yet we have only his letters as no replies were incorporated in the book. Rhetorical questions are often used in *The Jewish Spy* in the manner employed by Meshulam. Aaron Monceca asks Isaac Onis: "What thinkest thou, dear Isaac, to see so much Confusion and Disorder in the Manners and Customs of the *Nazarenes*?" (*The Jewish Spy*, I, letter i, p. 3). Onis does not answer this question directly, however, he does relate his own impressions from his first visit to Europe (letter ix, pp. 60–66).

In the same vein, Monceca resorts to rhetorical questions as he relates a "discovery" he has made in Paris: "I have a crabbed Question to propose to thee, and desire thee to communicate it to other Rabbies of thy Acquaintance, that I may know both their Sentiments and thine. I have discovered a vast number of *Jews* at *Paris*, who do not believe they are *Jews*, or know any thing at all of the Matter. Thou wilt think, perhaps, that I only jest, yet nothing is more true [. . .] I know not how we can refuse them the Title of *Jews*. They believe a God, who created the World, who rewards the Good, and punishes the Bad. What more do we believe? Is not that the Whole of our Religion, except a few Ceremonies that have been enjoined us by our Doctors and Priests?" (*The Jewish Spy*, I, letter iv, pp. 27–28). As in the previous case, Onis does not answer his questions. They are indeed rhetorical questions.

³⁰*Lettres Persanes*, xxx, pp. 128–129.

³¹*The Turkish Spy*, vol. I, book I, letter i, p. 2. The "spy", of necessity, must change his clothes so as to appear an ordinary citizen of the country. Monceca, too, wishes to appear European in his attire, thus – he writes – "I have left off my *Levant* Robe for a close-bodied Coat [. . .] I would fain have kept on my old *Habit*, but was obliged to dress my self after the *French* Manner, or expect to be stared at by all the Eyes of *Paris*" (*The Jewish Spy*, I, letter ii, pp. 9–10). Although Monceca is not attaching any importance to the change of clothes, as does Meshulam, he does make an interesting analogy between the clothes fashion and religious fashion (pp. 10–12).

³²*Igrot Meshulam*, pp. 40–41, 43. Meshulam's grandfather opposes the change of his Arabic clothes to European ones while his father favours the change. Out of respect to his grandfather, Meshulam does not change his clothes until after he departed from him. The grandfather believes that a Jew must not change "the customs of his fathers [forefathers?]." However, Meshulam voices his opinion that there is no divine law concerning the custom of wearing a particular dress. Following the advice of his father, he changes his oriental clothes. See my study of Euchel, cited in note 1, for a full discussion of the subject and its meaning.

A comparative treatment of Christian and Moslem religious ceremonies is used to underline the preference accorded by Montesquieu to the original source of all religions, namely, natural religion.³³ It was his hope, as it was the hope of the deists among the European thinkers of the Enlightenment, that natural religion should gain ground and eventually occupy the place of the existing revealed religions. The treatment of this theme by the Hebrew author serves another purpose. His purpose is to point out that foreign elements penetrated into Judaism in the past, and to show that precedents exist for changing Jewish religious law.³⁴ Describing the Catholic worship in Spain as very similar to the Jewish worship, Meshulam writes: "Most of their prayers are the songs of David from the Book of Psalms translated into their language. (. . .) and I saw them observing customs like the customs of Israel: they pray *tefilat hashkavah* (the prayer for the dead), and light candles for the souls of the dead." And he concludes in the rhetorical manner noted above: "I did not know whether they had seen and followed the custom of Israel, or whether those customs came to us while we were in exile among them; for I do not know whether there is any mention of these customs in either the Jerusalem or the Babylonian Talmud. Let me know your view in this matter."³⁵ Meshulam is here implying that some Jewish customs are not Jewish at all in their origin, but indeed constitute a direct borrowing from Christianity.³⁶

The Jewish perspective which Euchel lends to these themes makes it rather difficult, if not impossible, to trace their origin exclusively to *Lettres Persanes*. Indeed, various other epistolary writings treat religious themes in somewhat like manner.³⁷

The various religious practices and ordinances described in both works are, of course, seen from the Jewish point of view in the Hebrew work. Prayers are found in *Lettres Persanes* as well as in *The Letters of Meshulam*.³⁸ It is only natural that the prayers in the Hebrew work should be the Jewish prayers. In the same vein, the pseudo-Islamic sermonising, found in the French work, has its parallel in the old-school, orthodox homilies of traditional Judaism, as represented by Meshulam's grandfather.³⁹ Similarly, discussion of the achievement of happiness

³³*Lettres Persanes*, xxxv, pp. 138-140.

³⁴*Igrot Meshulam*, p. 45. An analysis of Euchel's text is found in my study cited in note 1.

³⁵*Igrot Meshulam*, p. 45. Cf. Friedlander's article, cited in note 2 above, p. 112.

³⁶See my study of Euchel, cited in note 1, part two, pp. 64-65, notes 125-128 and their related text.

³⁷A common literary convention seems to prevail in these writings. It consists of the writer's ostensible discovery that those professing another religion as well as their customs are virtually identical with their counterparts in the writer's own religion. For the foreign observer it is indeed a discovery; however, this device is employed in such a way as to convey the message of the discovery to the reader. In addition to the objectives discussed above in the text (Montesquieu's and Euchel's), this technique adds a twist of irony to the story. See note 26 above for such a use in *The Jewish Spy*, I, letter iv, pp. 27-28.

It should be pointed out that mourning and burial customs are featured in the *Chinese Letters*, pp. 305-314.

Unlike the glorifying tone of Meshulam in describing the church, Aaron Monceca draws a grotesque caricature of a church and the worship therein (*The Jewish Spy*, I, pp. 29-32).

³⁸*Lettres Persanes*, xlvi, pp. 164-166; *Igrot Meshulam*, p. 41.

³⁹*Lettres Persanes*, xxxix, pp. 150-152, Hagi Ibbi's letter to Ben Josué, a Jew converted to Islam. In *Igrot Meshulam* the grandfather, Mordechai, employs the traditional homilies in his pre-

in *Lettres Persanes* is, in *The Letters of Meshulam*, connected with the observance of the Jewish commandments.⁴⁰

Finally, the Troglodyte story, narrated at length in Montesquieu's fiction, has its apparent Jewish counterpart in 'Igroṭ Meshulam in the story of the Jews in Spain.⁴¹ As in the other examples discussed in this category, the similarities between the Troglodyte story and the story of the rise and fall of Spanish Jewry are too broad and general to warrant the conclusion that Euchel's work is here indebted to Montesquieu.

E. There is yet a fifth category which is comprised of dissimilarities in related aspects of the two works. Paradoxically, we may note that, like most of the similarities discussed above, these dissimilarities are peripheral and external. But if they are in effect too trivial to prove that there is no connection between the two epistolary works, they certainly cannot prove that there was a direct borrowing from Montesquieu, as suggested by some students of Euchel's work.

As we shall presently observe, Euchel's interests were not those of Montesquieu, nor did he have the same literary and social objectives. Euchel obviously had no intention of writing as voluminous a work as Montesquieu's. In the introduction to the *Letters of Meshulam* mention is made of twelve letters only.⁴² It is unfortunate that even this number of letters was not published; for the Hebrew work comprises just six letters. It stands to reason that Euchel had to confine his writing to a limited number of issues and subjects. His scope, then, is limited at the outset. Naturally, one expects a limitation in the number of protagonists and locales. Instead of three protagonists travelling in Europe, as is the case in *Lettres Persanes*, Euchel has only one, Meshulam. Although both protagonists originated in the Orient, Usbek comes from Persia whereas Meshulam comes from Syria.⁴³ Not only is their place of origin different, but,

sentation of his spiritual will to Meshulam (pp. 46–47). See my analysis of his letter in the study cited in note 1. Cf. the Mullah's reply to Usbek's request for religious guidance as interpreted by Paulina Kra, in 'Religion in Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes*', *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, LXXII, Geneva 1970, pp. 55–63.

⁴⁰*Lettres Persanes*, x, p. 75; 'Igroṭ Meshulam', p. 44. See note 39 above and its related text. Cf. Sha'an'an's 'The Letters of Meshulam as Symptom', pp. 362, 367, regarding Euchel's yearning for mundane happiness.

⁴¹*Lettres Persanes*, xi–xiv, pp. 76–88. The story of the rise and fall of Spanish Jewry ('Igroṭ Meshulam', pp. 81–83) is directly and openly critical of the conceit of the Jews in Spain, in contrast to the ostensible praise of the virtues of the Troglodytes by Montesquieu. I have elaborated on the Jewish theme in my study on Euchel cited in note 1. On two interpretations of the Troglodytes story as allegory, see Alessandro S. Crisafulli, 'Montesquieu's Story of the Troglodytes: Its Background, Meaning, and Significance', *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, LVIII (1943), pp. 372–392; Kra, 'Religion in Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes*', *loc. cit.*, pp. 40–55.

⁴²*Igroṭ Meshulam*, p. 39. In his introduction, which is addressed to the editors of the journal and the members of the society of the *Maskilim*, the editor–publisher writes that he was submitting twelve letters for publication. He expresses his willingness to send them the rest of the letters which he still possessed. Sha'an'an suspects that Euchel originally intended to compose a comprehensive work similar to those in the genre ('The Letters of Meshulam as Symptom', p. 369).

⁴³From Haleb, or Aleppo, which was known for its well-established Jewish community. The fact that both protagonists come to Europe from the Orient is cited as parallel by Sha'an'an ('*Iyunim*, p. 77; *Hasifrut Ha'ivrit*, I, p. 76) and Neiman ('A Hebrew Imitation', p. 164).

so is the main locale where the story takes place. The centre of activities in *Lettres Persanes* is Paris, whereas the Hebrew work has nothing to do with France, the French or with Paris. Instead, the *mise-en-scène* is Madrid; the people described are the Spaniards, who are contrasted with the Italians. The Spanish locale was selected by Euchel for the purpose of calling attention to the Marrano Jews and their predicament in Spain. *Lettres Persanes*, it is true, does have excerpts from letters coming from Spain and describes the Spaniards and their customs and institutions, but this material is not centrally germane to the French work as are the comparable references to Spanish material in Euchel's work.⁴⁴

The alleged indebtedness of Euchel to Montesquieu involves the notion that Euchel aimed at imitating *Lettres Persanes*, even that perhaps *The Letters of Meshulam* is to be considered a "free translation" of the former work. Some deviations from the original French work are explained as a misunderstanding of the original irony and satire on Euchel's part.⁴⁵

Careful comparison of the two works shows that most of the items used to prove resemblance are no more than external, superficial and peripheral similarities. I have found no internal, profound or meaningful resemblance. These superficial similarities have here been shown to offer no conclusive evidence of borrowing, for the same similarities are found elsewhere in the epistolary literature of the period.

We may suppose, therefore, that Euchel was familiar in a general way with *Lettres Persanes*, as he was probably familiar with some other writings of the epistolary genre.⁴⁶ Euchel, as a student of Kant, and as a Hebrew enlightener *par excellence*, was certainly versed in the Enlightenment literature of that century. As a matter of fact, we know from his *Haskalah* writings that he definitely was abreast of the Enlightenment issues of the time. Some of his topics and ideas

⁴⁴*Lettres Persanes*, letter lxxviii, pp. 258–263; *Igrot Meshulam*, p. 174. Sha'an'an maintains that Rica visited Spain, and that Meshulam, in the Hebrew work, comes to Spain "in his footsteps", thus alluding to a direct borrowing by Euchel from Montesquieu (*Iyunim*, p. 78; *Hasifrut Ha'ivrit*, I, p. 77). However, Rica does not pay a visit to Spain; he only cites from a letter which he received from a Frenchman who had visited in Spain (letter lxxviii).

A positive depiction of the Italians (as contrasted with the Spaniards, see note 9) is not unique to the Hebrew work. *The Jewish Spy*, for example, portrays the Genoese as "industrious, addicted to commerce" (vol. I, letter xxviii, p. 205). Meshulam writes that they "are diligent in every trade and commerce" (*Igrot Meshulam*, p. 174). *The Jewish Spy* further depicts the Genoese as "very polite" people, who "receive Persons that are recommended to them with very great Respect" (vol. I, letter xxxiv, p. 251). Meshulam depicts the Italians in general as follows: "They are modest and they welcome each person in accordance with his honour" (p. 174). These similarities, however, are not conclusive even in a limited sense, for *The Jewish Spy* contrasts the Genoese with the people of Rome who are portrayed as lazy and insolent . . . (vol. I, letter xxviii, pp. 204–205).

⁴⁵*Hasifrut Ha'ivrit*, I, p. 76.

⁴⁶Sha'an'an believes that Euchel was "an indubitable student of Montesquieu" (*Iyunim*, p. 75). In his early study, Sha'an'an states that Euchel has undoubtedly read the *Lettres Persanes*, although he was familiar with German imitations as well (*ibid.*, p. 77). However, in his last study, Sha'an'an raises the possibility that Euchel had not read Montesquieu in the original ('The Letters of Meshulam as Symptom', p. 355). Neiman, on the other hand, is definitely sure that "There can be no doubt that Euchel read the *Lettres Persanes* in the original" ('A Hebrew Imitation', p. 164). No documentation is given though.

were adopted by Euchel from general writings produced during the period of the Enlightenment.

In so far as *Lettres Persanes* and *'Igot Meshulam* are similar, this fact perhaps indicates some common ideology of the Enlightenment.

One should note, however, the fundamental difference between the two works, for they do not have the same literary goal. Although both are satiric works, they do not share the same object of satire. Moreover, the object of satire in the one is the subject of glorification in the other. Not only did Euchel gear his satire to the problems and predicament of Jewish society, but he directed his satire at the Jewish reality in Europe, and aimed its arrows at targets which are not identical with those of his French counterpart.

A better insight as to the essential difference between these works may be gained by finding the overall satiric concept, or guiding principle, in the two writings. Montesquieu bases his satire on the presupposition that the exotic oriental culture is much superior to the corrupted European culture. Euchel, on the other hand, has an antithetical presupposition. According to him, Meshulam's culture, the culture of the Orient, is a reflection of the Jewish culture, which, in his view, is inferior to European culture. The latter is considered by Euchel and by the other *Maskilim* as more advanced and enlightened.⁴⁷ European culture and civilisation ought to be adopted by Jewish society, according to this point of view of the Hebrew *Haskalah*. Its adoption would advance the Jewish cause, and the Jews would thus make progress in their integration into European society. This basic difference between the two writers dictated their differing approach to the subject-matter.

It should be emphasised that this difference in satiric concept sets Euchel's *'Igot Meshulam* apart from most other epistolary writings; as a literary phenomenon it is unique and outstanding.

Clearly, then, we must look elsewhere than to *Lettres Persanes* for a more meaningful and significant interpretation of *'Igot Meshulam*. Such an interpretation can be gained, I believe, by a more thorough exploration of Euchel's other writings.

Students of Euchel's epistolary writing have thus far failed to examine *The Letters of Meshulam* against the background of Euchel's other Hebraic works. It is especially surprising that no attention has been paid to a similar epistolary work published by the Hebrew author in 1785, which certainly should be compared with *The Letters of Meshulam*. In that year Euchel published in *Hame'asef* a series of authentic letters, which were entitled *The Letters of Isaac Euchel*, and were addressed to his student Michal Friedländer. These letters were written on the occasion of Euchel's documented voyage to Copenhagen in 1784.⁴⁸ Although

⁴⁷Expressions of the superiority of European culture abound in the writings of the early *Maskilim* in Germany, especially in their journal, *Hame'asef*. For one such example, see my article 'The First Call of A Hebrew *Maskil* to Convene A Rabbinic Assembly for Religious Reforms', *Tarbiz*, XLII, No. 3-4 (April-September 1973), pp. 484-491 [Hebrew; English summary, p. xiii]. It should be noted that both Sha'an'an and Neiman, in their respective studies, arrive at the same conclusion.

⁴⁸*Igot Yitzhaq Eichel* [*The Letters of Isaac Euchel*], *Hame'asef*, II (1785), pp. 116-121, 137-142

the two epistolary works by Euchel are essentially quite different, there appears to be a close relationship between the authentic letters and the fictional story whose epistolary form is a literary technique, and which was published a few years afterwards. It is safe to assume that if the European epistolary writings mentioned above did exert some influence on Euchel, such influence was interwoven with his personal experience during those travels, as given expression in his letters to Michal Friedländer.

Although the epistolary form is already in use in the first volume of *Hame'asef*, the letters consist mainly of articles which naturally do not exhibit the literary characteristics of the epistolary genre.⁴⁹ Euchel was actually the first author in modern Hebrew literature to have utilised the epistolary technique to treat a given subject through a series of letters, or one letter divided into various sections. It is only in Euchel's attempts that we note the impact of the epistolary novel which prevailed in European literature at the time.⁵⁰ The epistolary techniques in *The Letters of Isaac Euchel* are rather limited. It is one letter (though it is divided into sections) which is sent one way only, namely, from Euchel to his student. The author failed to publish a continuation of the first letter. His second attempt, in the form of *The Letters of Meshulam*, constitutes an important development in the genre. In it there are a number of letters, written by different people who have different views from one another. These views, as expressed by the respective writers, are presented in contrasting fashion in the best tradition of the genre.⁵¹ The epistolary techniques were further developed in the Hebrew literature of the nineteenth century. They are manifested in a full-fledged epistolary novel such as *The Revealer of Secrets* by Joseph Perl, or the partially epistolary novel, *The Hypocrite*, by Abraham Mapu.⁵²

(cited henceforth 'Igro^t Isaac Euchel'). These letters were republished by Adam Martinet, *Tif'eret Yisra'el* [The Glory of Israel], Bamberg 1837, pp. 59–69; by Shmuel Yosef Fuenn, *Sofrei Yisra'el* [The Writers of Israel], Vilna 1871, pp. 134–137; and by myself, *Mavo Lasifrut Ha'ivrit Ha'hadashah Bame'ot Ha-18 Vaha-19, Meqorot* [Introduction to Modern Hebrew Literature in the 18th and 19th Centuries, Texts], Jerusalem 1972, pp. 23–24, 26–27. On Euchel's trip and documents related to it, see H. Vogelstein, 'Handschriftliches zu Isaak Abraham Euchels Biographie', *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Juden*, Leipzig 1916, pp. 221–231.

Both Sha'an^an and Neiman, and for that matter all students of Euchel, are oblivious to the relation between 'Igro^t Isaac Euchel and 'Igro^t Meshulam.

⁴⁹*Hame'asef*, IV (1788), pp. 17–31 (Hebrew grammar); *Hame'asef*, II (1785), pp. 154–155, 169–174, 178–187 (Halachah, religious legal matters). Cf. the use of the epistolary form in non-fictional works in the second half of the eighteenth century in England, Frank Gees Black, *The Epistolary Novel in the Late Eighteenth Century*, Eugene, Oregon 1940, pp. 3–4.

⁵⁰See the appendices in Black's *The Epistolary Novel*, listing the epistolary fiction from 1740 to 1840, and the charts (p. 174); and Martha Pike Conant, *The Oriental Tale in England in the Eighteenth Century*, New York 1908, pp. 155–199, on the epistolary satire.

⁵¹The letter of Meshulam's father ('Igro^t Meshulam, pp. 47–50), is so structured as to contrast and contradict the fundamental principles as presented by the grandfather (pp. 46–47). See my study, cited in note 1, part two, pp. 59–61, notes 111–115 and the related text.

⁵²Joseph Perl, *Megaleh Temirin* [Revealer of Secrets], Wien 1819; Abraham Mapu, 'Ayt Zavo'a [The Hypocrite, or: The Painted Vulture], Vilna 1869. Cf. Shmuel Werses, *Sipur Veshorsho*, pp. 9–12, 18–21; David Patterson, 'Epistolary Elements in the Novels of Abraham Mapu', *Annual of the Leeds University Oriental Society*, IV (1964), pp. 132–149; Patterson, 'Epistolary Elements in the Hebrew Novels of the Period of Enlightenment', *Annual of the Leeds University Oriental Society*, V (1963–1965), pp. 86–99.

There are a number of aspects which the two works have in common. Both are travelogues in the form of letters. In this respect they are unique in *Hame'asef*. Both works pay attention to customs and practices prevalent in European society, exhibiting them mostly from an admirer's point of view.⁵³ Both works intend to point out the highly advanced and enlightened stand of European society *vis-à-vis* the alleged inferiority of Jewish society.⁵⁴ The same terminology regarding "customs" and "opinion" is used in the same context in both *The Letters of Isaac Euchel* and *The Letters of Meshulam*.⁵⁵ Prayer occupies an important place in both; it also plays a vital role in the plot of the story and in its ideology. The narrator-protagonist is portrayed in both works as a true believer who occasionally finds it necessary to pray to his god.⁵⁶

⁵³Although Meshulam is critical of the Spaniards in general, he is full of admiration of their manner of worship (*Igrot Meshulam*, p. 45). The apex of glorification of Europe is found in his description of the Italians (p. 174). Interestingly and significantly, the positive and glorified attitude towards the Italians has its reflection in Meshulam's similar depiction of Italian Jews (pp. 173, 174) and Italian Hebrew literature (pp. 245–249). Similarly the negative attitude towards the Spaniards has its reflection in the generally negative attitude towards the historical Spanish Jewry, excluding the Marranos (pp. 81–83, 171–173). The generally positive attitude towards Europe is discerned in Meshulam's tone of presentation of certain institutions (libraries, p. 174) and customs (women's liberation, p. 175).

In his non-fictional letters, Euchel writes that upon arrival in a city, it is his goal "to pay attention to the characteristics of every city [. . .] and situation of the people that dwells in it, and above all, [to pay attention] to our brethren the children of Israel that dwell there, [to] their situation [predicament] and characteristics, [and to note] whether they are well [goodness is their share; they are happy] or not, [and] whether they have begun to tend [shepherd, or: be associated with] the gardens of wisdom, or they refrained [their hands became weakened] from touching it [=wisdom]" (*Igrot Isaac Euchel*, p. 118). The phrase "whether they have begun to tend the gardens of wisdom" is indeed indicative of his point of view regarding the state of his contemporary Jewry in its adoption of Western culture and secular education and knowledge (= *Hochmah*, wisdom).

⁵⁴The editor-publisher prefaces the letters by referring to the state of the Jews being in *Galut*, exile ("the [God] lowered the glory of Israel to the dust" – *Igrot Meshulam*, p. 38), while praising the enlightenment activities of the *Maskilim* through their journal, *Hame'asef*. His utilitarian goal is clearly stressed in the preface. For Euchel's attitude towards Jewish society in his non-fictional letters, see note 53.

⁵⁵The terms *nimusim* (customs) and *de'ot* (opinions) are associated in *Igrot Isaac Euchel* (p. 118) and in *Igrot Meshulam* (p. 40). Underlying the concepts in the two works is the notion of the relativity of customs and opinions. The fictional work goes one step further to stress the non-divine nature of these customs and opinions, and their dependence on time and place (pp. 40–41). The term *techunah* (characteristic) also appears in the same context in both (*Igrot Isaac Euchel*, p. 118; *Igrot Meshulam*, p. 39).

A cursory check on the use of terms in some of the studied works reveals some instances where "customs" and "opinions" do appear together as the principal interest of the given author. Lyttelton, in his introduction to *Letters from a Persian*, p. vi, writes about "their own admir'd Customs, and favourite Opinions". Aaron Monceca, in *The Jewish Spy*, writes about "opinions" and "Manners" in one sentence (vol. I, letter ii, p. 13). However, it seems that the accepted terms are "Manners" and "Customs" which are more frequently used. See, for example, in the *Chinese Letters*, letter ii, p. 7; v, p. 25. In *The Jewish Spy*, I: letter i, p. 3; iii, p. 24 (by Monceca); ix, p. 60 (by Isaac Onis).

By contrast, Usbek undertook the trip as a result of his desire for "knowledge" ("savoir" – letter i), namely, his desire to become educated in Western sciences ("sciences de l'Occident" – letter viii). Usbek uses the term "customs" ("coutumes" – letter xxiii) and Rica employs the terms "European usages and customs" ("moeurs et [. . .] coutumes européennes" – letter xxiv).

⁵⁶*Igrot Isaac Euchel*, pp. 119–121 (two out of 12 pages); *Igrot Meshulam*, pp. 41, 44, 45.

The two epistolary writings manifest a considerable interest in the translation of poetry into Hebrew. The first deals with a translation into incorrect, sloppy Hebrew of a German poem, while the second offers an exemplary translation by the Hebrew poet Ephraim Luzzatto of Metastasio's poetry. The latter further discusses the qualities of Italian poetry in comparison with oriental poetry.⁵⁷

Both works have the same didactic, educational, preaching tone. This tone is quite natural to *The Letters of Isaac Euchel* where Euchel plays his role as a teacher. His intention, clearly stated, is to prove that one is able to express oneself on all subjects through the medium of the Hebrew language.⁵⁸ In the fictional work the use of the didactic tone is more complicated as it involves discovery of the author's covert point of view and the deciphering of the irony in the grandfather's letter.⁵⁹ Meshulam's rhetorical questions, too, are didactic in tone, as his questions are directed at the reader as well as at his correspondent. Meshulam's moralistic preaching to his correspondent is intended also for his reader.

As an author, Euchel uses the figure of his narrator to exhibit his presence as an educator. This feature is expressed in both works through the educational footnotes. Unlike most footnotes in the satirical epistolary genre which in many cases serve for satirical purposes, the notes here are serious, didactic and educational.⁶⁰

In both works Euchel is seen to possess a unique technique of description, or point of view. The narrator is made to observe the landscape from a central point, his own; he describes the scenery on his right and on his left.⁶¹

⁵⁷*Igrot Isaac Euchel*, pp. 140–142, a discussion of translation of a poem by Haller and of the translator occupies over two pages of this 12-page work. *Igrot Meshulam* devotes almost four pages (out of some 27), more than a full letter, or chapter, to Italian poetry and its excellent translation into Hebrew. As an example of poetry under the influence of the oriental-Arabic poetry he cites a poem by the Jewish poet Samuel Ibn Adiya. See also note 21 above.

⁵⁸*Igrot Isaac Euchel*, pp. 117–118.

⁵⁹See my study cited in note 1, part two, pp. 59–61, notes 111–115 and their related text.

⁶⁰On the use of footnotes for satirical purpose by the Hebrew writer Perl, see Werses, *Sipur Veshorsho*, pp. 27–28. For the use of notes by the Hebrew author Erter, see my paper 'Narrative Techniques of Isaac Erter's Satire "Gilul Nefesh"', read at the Sixth World Congress for Jewish Studies, Jerusalem 1973; published as 'Erter's Narrative Methods in the Satire "Gilgul Nefesh"' *Biqoret Ufarshanut*, XI–XII (January 1978), pp. 135–136 [Hebrew]. It should be stressed that the footnotes in *Lettres Persanes* are not intended for satirical purpose. Cf. Robert F. O'Reilly, 'The Structure and Meaning of the *Lettres Persanes*', *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, LXVII, Geneva 1969, pp. 95–96. Some of the footnotes are intended to highlight the role of the fictional translator who is mentioned in the introduction. Neither are the notes in *The Jewish Spy* of a satirical nature; they are learned and serious.

Although the first footnote in the Hebrew work is signed 'divrei Hame'asfim', [the words of the editors of *Hame'asef*] (p. 39), and similarly the first footnote in each new instalment (pp. 172, 246), are so signed, I tend to think that Euchel himself, a former editor of the journal, and a frequent contributor afterwards, provided the footnotes himself, and used the customary editorial signature. At least one such footnote (p. 40, note***) plays an important role in deciphering the point of view of the editor-publisher regarding the central, thematic problem of changing one's customs in a foreign environment.

⁶¹*Igrot Isaac Euchel*, p. 119: "On my right is the big, wide river [. . .] and on my left fertilised fields." *Igrot Meshulam*, p. 42: "We passed the Grecian lands [countries] which are on our right, and the lands of the African part on our left." The latter is especially an artificial point of view indicative of the use of a map rather than an actual seafaring near the Greek islands; for one does not see the African continent while travelling near the coast of Greece.

There is further an identical date – the Hebrew month 'Iyar – in the first letters of both works.⁶² Some unique seafaring terminology appears likewise in both.⁶³

The protagonists of the two epistolary writings may be related to one another. Michal, Euchel's student in the first letters, appears in the image of Meshulam, the fictional figure who is out to look for wisdom and truth. Isaac Euchel (abbreviation, in Hebrew, is A.A.), the central, active protagonist of the first letters, turns out to be 'Uriyah Ha'Eshtemo'i (Hebrew abbreviation: also A.A.).⁶⁴

The identification of the protagonists in the two Hebrew works leads us to conclude that these works are more than merely closely related. It appears that *The Letters of Meshulam* in effect continues *The Letters of Isaac Euchel* in a fictional manner. The authentic letters and Euchel's European trip apparently stimulated the author to follow up the letters discontinued in 1785. Five years later Euchel decided to publish the second series of letters. The passing years brought several changes in the function of the authentic key figures as transformed in the fictional letters. Michal, in the guise of Meshulam, is now going to seek wisdom on his own. He can no longer rely on his teacher for that. True, he does listen to the advice given to him by the teacher–father – Euchel, in his literary character of 'Uriyah; he still continues to receive his letters, he acts in accordance with his father's advice, and he considers his father an example to be followed in religious and social matters. Yet Meshulam now must experience in himself and by himself; he must face reality by himself, and he must cope with his own problems so as to find his own truth. The identical dates in the beginning of the first letters in the two works are perhaps a testimony that Meshulam follows in Euchel's footsteps.

The fictional names in *The Letters of Meshulam* are significant. *Meshulam* derives from the Hebrew root meaning "to be whole", or "to be integral", and perhaps indicates one who is looking for his "wholeness".⁶⁵ 'Uriyah, meaning "the light", or "the fire of the Lord", represents the enlightened, though with a traditional orientation.⁶⁶ 'Uriyah's letter exhibits many views expressed pre-

⁶²*Igrot Isaac Euchel*, p. 116; *Igrot Meshulam*, pp. 39, 43.

⁶³*Igrot Isaac Euchel*, p. 120; *Igrot Meshulam*, p. 40: "Rav haḥovel vechol malaḥav" [the captain and all his sailors].

⁶⁴Isaac Euchel used to sign all his books and articles in Hebrew and in Yiddish not by the Hebrew name *Yizḥaq*, but by its Yiddish equivalent 'Izeq (whose first letter is the Hebrew Aleph). It is only in the title of the non-fictional letters that his name appears as *Yizḥaq Eichel*. Thus the abbreviation A.A. [Hebrew: Alef. Alef.] corresponds. 'Uriyah, in Hebrew, begins also with an Alef. Similarly, it may be supposed that the abbreviation of the grandfather's name, *Mordechai Ha-Eshtemo'i*, may echo that of the mullah, *Mehemet Ali* (*Lettres Persanes*, xvi, p. 94).

On an attempt to identify the protagonists of *Lettres Persanes* and consider it as a contemporary allegory, see J. L. Carr, 'The Secret Chain of the *Lettres Persanes*', *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, LV, Geneva 1967, pp. 333–344. Cf. note 41 above.

⁶⁵ShLM. See Friedlander's article, cited above in note 2, p. 108, note 9.

⁶⁶'Or Yah, or 'Ur Yah. The grandfather, Mordechai, may be the representation of Mordechai Hazadiq, the righteous, after the book of Esther. See Ch. Szmeruk, 'The Name Mordecai-Marcus – Literary Metamorphosis of a Social Ideal', *Tarbiz*, XXIX (1960), pp. 76–98 [Hebrew; English summary, p. v–vi]. See also Friedlander's above-mentioned article, note 8 and related text.

viously by Moses Mendelssohn, the eminent guide of Hebrew *Haskalah*. In the light of Euchel's biography of Mendelssohn, one may conclude that Euchel created in the figure of 'Uriyah a composite both of himself and of Mendelssohn.⁶⁷

To sum up, then, Euchel could have been influenced by *Lettres Persanes* as well as by other such epistolary writings. Yet this influence more probably reached *The Letters of Meshulam* through the medium of his own experience as first expressed in the authentic, non-fictional *Letters of Isaac Euchel* – hence the differences in literary formulation and in the ideological objectives of the two authors. There is something uniquely Hebraic in Euchel's work in his Haskalah point of view and in his treatment of vital problems that were the focal point of Jewish reality at that time. Euchel's field of vision is not as wide, as inclusively European, as was Montesquieu's. His work is concentrated on the Jewish and Hebraic aspects of the European milieu.

Thus, while Montesquieu treats the total range of European literature, though with some obvious limitations, Euchel deals only with poetry and its translation into Hebrew. The French author discusses various aspects of world history, whereas the Hebrew author has in mind Jewish history in Spain. It should be pointed out that Euchel's historical analysis is far from purely academic; it is not intended to be an irrelevant hypothesis on far-fetched historical issues. More searching analysis of his discussion of the rise and fall of Spanish Jewry would yield significant insight into Euchel's views on the German Jewry of his day.⁶⁸ The limitation of his field of vision, compared to that of Montesquieu, is necessitated by the narrower scope of Euchel's work.

In conclusion: *The Letters of Meshulam* perhaps owes some features of its form and some of its topics to *The Persian Letters* and similar epistolary writings; but failure to compare *The Letters of Meshulam* with *The Letters of Isaac Euchel* deprives the work of its significance as an artistic piece of literature.

⁶⁷See my article cited in note 1, part two, p. 62, note 120 and its related text.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, p. 66, note 129 and related text. Neiman seems to project the same view as to Euchel's intentions (in his article, p. 167).