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**THE LITERARY GENRE OF
THE TRAVELOGUE IN HEBREW
HASKALAH LITERATURE:
SHMUEL ROMANELLI'S
MASA BA'RAV**

"Twentieth-century studies have almost uniformly ignored the literary value and distinctive generic characteristics of eighteenth-century nonfiction travel literature," complained Charles L. Batten, Jr., in the introduction to his study of eighteenth-century travel literature in Europe entitled *Pleasurable Instruction*.¹

This complaint is regrettably equally applicable to Hebrew literature as well. For modern studies have ignored the literary value and the distinctive generic characteristics of eighteenth-century Hebrew travelogues.

One should not be too surprised with this phenomenon, for a detailed and thorough study of various other genres, prevalent in Hebrew Enlightenment literature, is also absent. However, it should be noted that a significant progress towards fulfilling this lacuna in the literary study of Hebrew Enlightenment genres has been made recently.²

Although non-fiction travel accounts in Hebrew Haskalah (Enlightenment) literature were not as abundant as their counterpart in European literature which became one of the most popular literary forms of the eighteenth century,³ they nevertheless left a lasting impression.⁴

Needless to say, there were travel accounts which had been published prior to the Enlightenment. However, they shared very little formal similarity with those of the Enlightenment.⁵ On the other hand, eighteenth-century authors considered contemporary travel literature as a new development which possessed new literary characteristics "never before seen in the accounts of travelers," according to Batten.⁶ In the eighteenth century, the travelogue was deemed 'literary' and was distinguished by its clear literary traits. Thus, the critique and assessment of this genre were formulated according to prevailing literary criteria. Moreover, as literary taste had changed in that cen-

tury, so did the literary criteria of the travelogue.⁷ These criteria excluded imaginary voyages as well as pseudo-travels from this genre of authentic travel literature.⁸

Travel accounts were also prevalent in the Hebrew literature of past generations. Suffice it to mention such popular works as *The Travels of Benjamin of Tudela* of the twelfth century, the *Story of David Rewveni* of the sixteenth century, and many others.⁹ They are generally characterized as travel reports on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. In them, a traveler records cursory descriptions of Jewish communities and holy places which he passes on his voyage to and in Eretz Israel.

Hebrew literature can boast, like European literature, that “travel literature attracted the most important writers of the day.”¹⁰ For two significant writers of early Haskalah, namely Isaac Euchel and Shmuel Romanelli, were attracted by and contributed to this genre of the travelogue.

The first travelogue that could be related to the modern genre¹¹ was published in 1785 in *Hameasef*, the journal of Hebrew Enlightenment. Entitled “Igrot Yitzhak Euchel” (“The Letters of Yitzhak Euchel”), this short travelogue, written in an epistolary form, features the educational-didactic nature of the European travel accounts during the 1780s.¹²

Several years later, in 1792, Shmuel Romanelli produced a book-size travelogue, *Masa Ba‘rav*,¹³ which is the subject of this paper. Published by the Haskalah press in Berlin, the book presents Romanelli’s highly acclaimed account of his travels to, and in, North Africa. In it, he describes how he accidentally began a journey to Morocco. He was on his way back to his home in Italy, stopping briefly in Gibraltar. Having no money nor any means of transportation, he accepted an offer from a merchant to join him on a visit to Morocco. This visit turned out to be a lengthy stay of four years in the land of Barbary.

A prolific writer, poet, playwright and translator, Romanelli depicts not only his journeys but also his encounter and experience with Jews and non-Jews in North Africa. His own adventurous story and struggle for survival is integrated into the story of the king’s Jewish courtiers, European consuls, and various Jewish rabbis and dignitaries. Moreover, having witnessed the 1790 horrendous riots and pogroms perpetrated against the Jewish population by the new king, Romanelli vividly records this historical event in his work.

Romanelli’s keen eye for describing the social, cultural, and economic condition of the Jews in Morocco, and his interest in customs, manners, and ways of life of both his co-religionists and Moslems made his book a valuable source of information for historians and ethnographers.¹⁴ The sum total of his exotic visit to Barbary—which

had very few equals at that time¹⁵—is a very interesting and unique book in Hebrew Haskalah literature.

The book was very popular among Hebrew readers, attested by its nine Hebrew editions published to date.¹⁶ Hebrew critics and literary historians treated *Masa Ba'rav* most favorably,¹⁷ but they did not immure it by generic classification as being a travelogue. In their analysis of the book they introduced a multiplicity of terms to denote a travel account,¹⁸ and some even confused the issue further by suggesting, with some justification, that the book is read “like a novel” (Klausner),¹⁹ or that it is “read like a suspenseful, realistic novel” (Zinberg).²⁰ Shaanan related the book to autobiographical literature,²¹ and both he and Zinberg employed the terms ‘memoirs’ and ‘diary’²² which confused the matter even more. However, in contrast, several critics—Fahn, Schirmann and the Stillmans—do cite the generic classification as being that of the travelogue.²³

These ambiguities notwithstanding, the seminal works on Romanelli done by Klausner, Fahn,²⁴ and Schirmann²⁵—the latter published a modern, scholarly edition of *Masa Ba'rav*—contributed significantly to an appreciation of this author. A more recent article by Norman and Yedida Stillman and their recently published translation of *Masa Ba'rav* into English,²⁶ signal a re-awakening interest in this “nomad poet,” as he was called by Schirmann.

An attempt to trace Romanelli's own perception of the travelogue genre may contribute to an understanding of the genre and the author. Some of Romanelli's introductory comments and explanations as to why he had written the book shed light on his concept of the genre. Romanelli stresses the novelty and uniqueness of the subject matter in his book. Jews in North Africa, he says, were inaccessible to European writers as a consequence of the language barrier. Now, he, Romanelli, is able to break it.²⁷

By referring to the novel aspects of *Masa Ba'rav*, Romanelli seems to follow the demand of eighteenth-century travelogue writing, expressed by Joseph Addison, for innovation in the contents of the travel account.²⁸

More importantly, Romanelli assures the reader of his expertise in the subject, which is based on his long stay in North Africa. Obviously, he is alluding to the dubious practice of the ‘fireside traveler’ who relied on somebody else's experience and on his own imagination, oftentimes more on the latter. Whether referring to a sub-genre which Percy Adams calls ‘travel lies,’²⁹ or to utterly imaginary voyages, his own travel account—stresses Romanelli—is neither, for it is based on his own true experiences.

Aware of the use of fictional material in this genre of the travelogue as well as the falsification of material, Romanelli wishes to set the record straight from the beginning, stating that he should “tell the events that occurred to me during my travels.” He wants to assure the reader that his writing is authentic and is not a figment of his imagination, as might be the case with some travelogue writers who invented or fabricated imaginary voyages, places, and people. “Only that which I have seen will I endeavor to tell,” he writes.

On the other hand, Romanelli seems to wish to avoid an accusation of being ‘too egotistic’—a term used in eighteenth-century travelogue criticism—in his travelogue narrative. According to a prevailing literary convention, which will be discussed later on, the travelogue should not be merely a personal story of one individual telling only about himself.³⁰ Consequently, Romanelli emphasizes in the introduction that his personal story is part of a general story of people and places. He writes that his four-year experience has enabled him to meet people of all sorts, “small and large,” and that his endeavor was to learn about them and about their life and background. His story, then, is inseparable from the story of the people of North Africa.

Romanelli further rejects the notion that a writer of a travelogue may present whatever is on his mind regarding the travelogue, so long as the subject matter is remote and no one is able to contradict his writings. As to his own travel account, he says that it is true and that it may be checked out for authenticity.³¹

To this end, Romanelli emphasizes the element of truth in his story, saying “that only truth alone will be the light of my path; I shall not be partial towards anybody, not even to myself.” This emphasis on truth and impartiality, as we shall later see, should not be viewed as reflecting an affinity with the autobiographical literature. It is characteristic of the travelogue, and indeed a similar use of ‘truth’ is found in the European genre.³²

A better insight of Romanelli’s overall concept of the book may be gained from the title, *Masa Ba’rav*. It is not ‘masa’ (מסע)—travel—as one would expect of a travel account, but ‘masa’ (משא).

The title is based on the verse in Isaiah, 20:13: “Masa ba’rav, baya’ar ba’rav talinu orhot dedanim.” The traditional translation reads: “The burden upon Arabia. In the thickets in Arabia shall ye lodge, Oh ye caravans of Dedanites.”

Romanelli explains the meaning of the title word ‘masa’—משא—in the sub-title, published on the title page of the book (which was oddly enough omitted from Schirmann’s 1968 edition). He writes: “It

is the book of the occurrences which intertwined upon me, and the vision [masa—מָסָא] which I have seen [ḥaziti—חִזִּיתִי] in the districts of the west” (Maghreb, i.e., North Africa). This noun-verb combination of ‘masa’ and ‘ḥaza’ (prophecy, view) is based on Isaiah’s prophecies of doom.³³

Hebrew critics and literary historians did not hold the meaning of ‘masa’ to be ‘burden,’ but indeed ‘vision.’ They were nevertheless intrigued by the ambiguity of ‘vision’ and ‘travel’ implied by the use of the homonym מָסָא—masa—in the context of the travelogue מסע—masa, and tried to explain it in different ways. Fahn thus says that “Romanelli’s travel was elevated to a vision and prophecy.”³⁴ Fahn’s statement is made in context of a discussion dealing with the quality of Romanelli’s style. In the same vein writes H. N. Shapira: “Not a travel, but a vision—a prophecy” which contains, according to this historian of Hebrew literature, “inner feelings, images and lyrical thought—travel impressions which border between truth and vision.”³⁵ Shaanan explains the concept of ‘masa’ as a “unique combination of impressions, experiences, determined evaluations, and descriptions for their own sake.”³⁶ Oddly enough, Schirmann, a student of Romanelli and his writings, who published a commentary on the text of *Masa Ba’rav*, did not attempt to explain this intriguing title.

These traditional critics and historians of Hebrew literature did not pay enough attention to the biblical contextual reference of this expression, ‘masa ba’rav,’ as perceived and represented by Romanelli. With the exception of the Stillmans, most critics did not read the manifested inner message which is included in Romanelli’s book. Notwithstanding Romanelli’s beautiful style and his artistic description which is said to be in between vision and prophecy, the tenor of his book is a harsh assessment of the condition of Jews in Morocco patterned after the biblical prophecies of Isaiah.

The ‘masa,’ therefore, must essentially be seen as a literary and pseudo-prophetic statement on the Jewish community in North Africa. Romanelli finds this community to be socially distressed, politically deprived, and culturally depraved. He depicts the condition of the Jews at times as tantamount to the horrendous terror perpetrated by the medieval crusaders in Europe. The cruelty of the Moroccan ruler in his acts of vengeance against the local Jewish communities has had its “normal” precedent in daily life as Jews were being constantly deprived of their equality in society and of some of their basic human rights.

That Romanelli has the biblical prophecies of destruction and doom as a literary backdrop in his consciousness, may be discernable

from his own reference to Ezekiel's lament on Tyre, which is somewhat related to Isaiah 21:13 as the Dedanites are cited in both.³⁷

Romanelli's use of the homonym 'masa' in the context of the travelogue wishes to allude to the notion of מסע—travel. However, his very selection of the word 'vision' rather than 'travel' highlights the acute distinction between the two and underlines the essence of doom and destruction, rather than travel, as the main tenet of the book.

Among the various scholars who dealt with Romanelli's *Masa Ba'ra'v*, Norman and Yedida Stillman presented the best view of the author's intention in their recent article. Their brilliant translation of the title, 'Travail in An Arab Land,' best attests to that.³⁸

We may suppose that Romanelli is aware of the prevailing literary conventions of the European travelogue. For he is definitely versed in European literature,³⁹ and, as far as Jewish literature is concerned, his writings indicate his knowledge of the corpus of Jewish letters. Nevertheless, it is not your run-of-the-mill travel account according to the European literary standards. Rather than adopting the European genre as is, Romanelli adapts this genre and its literary conventions to fit his own individual taste, needs, and interests. The very use of the Hebrew language, his awareness of the tradition of Hebrew letters in past generations, and the endeavor to renew Hebrew literature through the Enlightenment pose many challenges to the Hebrew writer. Consequently, Romanelli creates his own literary conventions which emerge from the tension between the two literary traditions, the Judaic and the European, both constituting his creative milieu.

Thus, it befits his literary inclination as a Hebrew *maskil* (enlightener) to adopt two of the declared goals of the European genre of the travelogue; namely, both to instruct and to entertain the reader.⁴⁰ Many of the literary devices and travelogue conventions employed by Romanelli fall within these categories.

Another aspect of Romanelli's writing—the exceeding emphasis on the persona of the narrator and the autobiographical inclination—is indeed quite problematic. For until the 1780s and 1790s, it was conventionally required of a travelogue writer to limit the autobiographical part of the story which was considered 'too egotistical' by the prevailing literary standards.⁴¹ Aware of these trends, Lempriere, for example, apologized for the 'egotism' in his book.⁴²

The close affinity between the travelogue and other literary genres in the eighteenth century prompted some critics and literary historians to classify the travelogues as "specialized autobiographies" or even to include them within "geography."⁴³

This over-emphasis on the autobiographical aspect of Romanelli's travelogue apparently caused Shaanan to classify *Masa Ba'rav* within the genre of the autobiography.⁴⁴ Perhaps Romanelli himself contributed to this confusion by laying too much emphasis on "truth" in his writing, a necessary—albeit not too often applied—feature of autobiographical literature.⁴⁵

In light of these erroneous attempts at generic classification of *Masa Ba'rav*, one should be reminded that towards the end of the eighteenth century the literary taste of travelogue writers had changed, while literary conventions were modified to reflect the individuality of the travel writer. With time, first-person narratives relating autobiographical occurrences became more prevalent in travel writing as the stigma of 'egotism' disappeared. Thus, it is likely that Romanelli's travel account reflected these generic changes, resulting with the emphasis he placed upon the autobiographical aspects of his story.

Another literary characteristic of Romanelli's writing is his ostensible proclivity to tell a story and to weave a plot as part of his travelogue, and not merely to transmit information and facts and to describe dryly landscape and people. This is discerned not only by the abundance of anecdotes present, but by the apparent need of the narrator to relate a story, activate a plot, develop characters, and to 'close' a story; namely, to let the reader know in detail what happened to the characters cited in his narrative.

Thus, he does not write merely as a noninvolved bystander, or as a noncommittal tourist, but insists on telling "the occurrences which intertwined upon me."⁴⁶

Based on the above discussion, it is safe to conclude that in spite of the generic classification of *Masa Ba'rav* as a travelogue, the book transcends its boundary as a travel account. In its inclination towards a wide, panoramic, character-rich epic writing (though with some lyric elements), *Masa Ba'rav* fills a lacuna in the beginning of Hebrew Haskalah literature. This type of lengthy prose did not exist at the time in Hebrew letters because of the absence of the novel. The latter was introduced into Hebrew literature only in mid 19th-century in Mapu's biblical novel *Ahavat Zion* [Love of Zion]. There is ample ground to support the notion that the author allowed himself the poetic license of transcending the limits of the genre of the travelogue into the domain of the wide-scope story thus employing several additional literary genres. Against this backdrop, Romanelli's literary desire to tell a story, have a plot, develop some characters, close the story—as aforementioned—use the dialogue and the epistolary formats (see text following note 59), and even include a poem at the end of the book (p. 91 [1792 edition]; pp. 145–146 [1968

edition]) may now be understood in their historical and literary perspectives.

Needless to say, the main impetus of a travelogue is the traveling itself, and destiny provided Romanelli—much to his dismay—plenty of occasions to travel and thus record his experience for posterity. It will be rewarding to trace and then examine the generic concept of the travel account as perceived by this Hebrew writer. In addition, we will examine contemporary concepts of travel and depiction of traveling in a European travelogue as well as another Hebrew travel account for the sake of comparison.

To remove any suspicion of ‘fireside’ travelogue, a writer of a non-fiction travel account was supposed to authenticate the travelogue by the very nature, content, and texture of his writing. This would enable the reader to ascertain the authenticity of the travel by the very text itself, by inner textual proofs, and through the author’s use of literary conventions accepted in the genre.⁴⁷

Therefore, as a writer of a travelogue, Romanelli makes an effort to describe specific locales which he had visited through the delineation of landscape, nature, seasons, climate and weather. In his attempts to portray the North African reality, he uses various devices to intensify and enhance his depiction of reality so as to authenticate his voyage from the very description itself.

One of the ways to ensure conspicuously the veracity of a voyage and the account thereof was in presenting a detailed and exact record of the traveler’s experiences. However, a balanced presentation of details which did not exceedingly expose the writer himself—lest he be accused of egotism—was required of the author during most of the eighteenth century so that his travel account be accepted as genuine. With this delicate balance, the travelogue was yet to entertain and to instruct.⁴⁸

Romanelli’s concept of a non-fiction travel narrative as found in *Masa Ba’rav* is different from Euchel’s in the short travelogue the latter had published in *Hameasef*. Many of Euchel’s travel depictions are typified by the proverbial folk use of the biblical expression “vay-ise‘u vayahanu”⁴⁹ which is characterized by a laconic citing of many places visited, with no or very little description. Indeed, Euchel’s scope is much narrower, and his travel account is limited to twelve published pages. Also, the time span described in Euchel’s short pieces is rather brief. By contrast, both the span of time and the scope of Romanelli’s account are much wider; Romanelli’s time span in Morocco was four years, and the travelogue is a full-length book of ninety-two pages in the first edition. Thus, the two Hebrew travelogues are fundamentally

different in that Romanelli has got more room to dwell on extraneous details of his travel.

Romanelli is not inclined, however, to dwell excessively on the trip to Africa, devoting merely five lines to his boat trip from Gibraltar to Tetuan, and citing some points of interest on the way.⁵⁰ By comparison, Lempriere is even briefer, setting aside three lines for this purpose.⁵¹ Once in North Africa, Romanelli accentuates his land trips elaborating upon his riding in a caravan to Tangiers, as is evidenced by a more lengthy and colorful description of a page and a half. Additional land travels to other cities—Rabat, Mazagan and Mogador—on the southern coast of Morocco, follow in the same manner of description.⁵²

Romanelli's attempts to authenticate descriptions by an exact and detailed portrayal are not always successful. At times, his descriptions seem somewhat schematic, 'geographical,' or map-oriented, rather than inspired by his actual experience as a traveler. From his descriptions of Gibraltar, for example, it appears as though the author was standing by the map and describing the geographic position of the tip of Europe (1; 23).⁵³ Referring to the Gibraltar strait as the two pillars of Hercules alludes to the author's knowledge of Greek mythology, but not necessarily testifies to his actual visit at the place. Later on, however, as he proceeds to describe the crossing of the strait and uses first-person narrative, his story becomes more interesting, more detailed, and it appears to be veracious, (2; 24).

As a result of language constraints and literary conventions, an eighteenth-century writer of a travel account in Hebrew faced a unique problem that inherently limited authenticating an actual experience by its very description. Like other Hebrew Haskalah writers, Romanelli utilized biblical phrases as literary and linguistic conventions. These biblical expressions tended to generalize the experience rather than depict it accurately or portray it singularly as a unique experience. For example, lunch at noon is depicted as occurring "as the sun arrives in mid-day." The occasion itself is described as "we set down to eat bread," and the place as "the meadows in the shade of the tree" (p. 2; 26).

Use of language in these instances appears to be rather general and does not provide details of the event or an exact depiction of it. True, by generalizing the experience, the author brings it closer to the contemporary reader in a pattern that is used in Haskalah literature in general.⁵⁴ However, it does not contribute to the reader's enrichment through the depiction of a unique experience. Furthermore, the generalization tends to present a superficial description which lacks in concreteness and detail of the locale or the event. As a matter of fact, this linguistic and literary convention in and by itself

may be the cause of some doubt, among modern readers (although not so much the contemporary readers), as to the exactitude—and the authenticity—of the description.

As Romanelli embarks upon another description, that of the twin cities Rabat and Sali, he compares them to other twin cities in France and in Germany which are also separated by a river (p. 56; 98). While distinguishing himself as a man of the world, he fulfills the generic goal of educating the reader, and communicating with him on an intellectual level. Although Romanelli's limited description does not help the reader visualize the cities, it provides him some knowledge of geography.

Although the style of his description of the river is still biblical, florid, and euphuistic, Romanelli utilizes adjectives, verbs, and a simile to enliven his scene. As he describes the city, the author's choice of adjectives such as beautiful, strong . . . (57; 98), leave very little for the imagination. The reader is being told what the author's views of the places and scenes were, rather than being shown the sites and sights so that he may reach his own opinion. In other instances, the author also offers an historical background of places he visited for background and education.⁵⁵

As the narrator dwells on his activities in the first-person narrative, the descriptions acquire a fuller and more authentic air. These activities lend themselves to a more authentic depiction of the author's experience, his thoughts, and his reactions.

One such occasion involves Romanelli's riding a mule on the mountains. Since the traveler is now actively involved in the episode and does not merely report it as a bystander (71; 117–118), the reader senses a feeling of the authentic experience. This does not occur when Romanelli describes a landscape with which he is not directly involved except as a passive onlooker.

Language does not present that kind of a problem as Romanelli assumes his self-appointed mission to educate his readers.

*Masa Ba'ra*v ought to be viewed as a product whose literary characteristics and goals may be said to be identical with—or at least close to—the characteristics of the literature of Haskalah. One major trait of this travel account, in its affinity to both the literature of the Haskalah and to the genre of European travelogue, is to educate the reader. By its very nature, the travelogue, whose purpose is to acquaint the reader with different peoples, cultures and customs, lends itself to this educational and instructional goal.

Romanelli's most intensive—albeit not too successful—attempt at instruction is in the domain of comparative linguistics. He endeavors

to show the relationship between Arabic, which is spoken in Morocco, and its Semitic sister-language, Hebrew. He shows similarities in words, idioms, and expressions, relating Arabic words to their alleged equivalents in biblical, mishnaic, or talmudic Hebrew. For example, he associates an Arabic coin called 'matkal' with the Hebrew word 'mishkal' (36; 71).

Linguistically, his explanations are less than satisfactory, although the uninitiated reader may enjoy the baseless similarities as a clever pun, or as the author's serendipitous find. For instance, this self-taught linguist relates the Arabic word 'na'am' ('yes') as being close to the Hebrew word 'na'im,' pleasant (54; 95). The linguistic result is not that positive nor pleasant. . . .

Romanelli explains his linguistic interests as follows: "As it has been my way to search for the sources of words and names in Arabic, I made it my business to study and search this name" (68; 114). He bases this linguistic pursuit on Abraham Ibn Ezra's comment to the effect that all of the languages of antiquity were based on one format ("matkonet aḥat," p. 69; 114).

Ironically, this alleged linguistic similarity and others help crystallize the distinct non-linguistic notion of dissimilarity that reigns throughout this work. It accentuates the difference between the enlightened Jews of Europe—the *maskilim*—whose social and cultural life has started to change, and their fellow-Jews of the Maghreb, who were still in the dark ages of ignorance, social discrimination and political degradation.

Another way of instructing the readers is achieved through quotations from the Bible and the Talmud, although not without some misquoting.⁵⁶ He continuously refers to medieval Jewish literature, to classical Greek literature, and to contemporary European literature. Invariably these references appear in the text and in the footnotes, and their manner of presentation may be direct or indirect.

This use of references has its precedence in the European genre. Addison, for example, has 141 classical quotations in his *Remarks on Several Parts of Italy*.⁵⁷ It is a demonstration of knowledge and is indicative of the author as being a *maskil*, a knowledgeable writer who is versed in his people's literature and lore, no less than in the literature of western cultures. Significantly, it also demonstrates the writer's desire to partake in the general activity of the Enlightenment. For in this undertaking, he is actively engaged in instructing and educating his readers not only in matters related directly to the subject matter itself—that is, the author's journey in North Africa—but also in general knowledge which is only indirectly related to the topic.

It serves to remind the reader that as a *maskil*, the author carries with him the treasures of his language and culture to far-away coun-

tries; even to those which are culturally inferior to his own. This alleged inferiority of his environs and ostensible lack of cultural facilities do not curtail our author. He does not require a library, or a spiritual milieu, to fire his power plant. As a matter of fact, the spiritual resources that enrich his innermost experiences are not limited to geography or for that matter to any defined topic. The writer draws on the everflowing spiritual and cultural fountainhead inside of him.

Romanelli shows his erudition in Jewish and non-Jewish literatures regardless of whether the context merits his remarks or not. He exhibits his knowledge of geography, cites historical background of places he visited, and as aforementioned offers a mini-course on a comparative study of languages (19–20; 48–49). The fact that he is no more than a dilettante in these subjects does not pose any noticeable problem for Romanelli.

The Jewish community of Morocco, as mentioned earlier, is the main subject of *Masa Ba'ra'v*, according to Romanelli's own explanation. During his long stay at the various communities in North Africa, Romanelli became intimately acquainted with many Jews from all walks of life. As a keen observer of people, Romanelli sets out to study his fellow-Jews (p. 7; 31): rabbis, teachers, tradesmen, courtiers, as well as simple Jews, young and old alike, men and women—the latter, especially the young, not without some amorous overtones.

In describing the Moroccan Jews, he endeavors to delineate such details as their ways of life, their customs, habits, clothes and religious ceremonies, practices and beliefs. Furthermore, not of least interest are their superstitions and nonsensical customs, which Romanelli, as a Hebrew *maskil*, delights to expose. He attributes these phenomena to the influence of Arab society and to sheer ignorance. They are formed as a result of the cultural and social separation of these Jews from Europe, the lack of books, and the lack of information from the European continent.

Thus, Romanelli is true to his goal, as a *maskil*, attempting to enlighten his people and teach them the right way, namely, the way of the Enlightenment. Moreover, as a traveler, he typifies himself not only as spreading the light of Haskalah through the publication of his writings, as did his fellow-*maskilim*, but as actually engaging in the dissemination of Enlightenment on the grass-roots level of the people.

This unique aspect of the Hebrew travelogue presents a singular trait of the Hebrew genre which is not known to be found in its European counterpart. Not only is there a relation between the travelogue and other contemporary genres, but the Hebrew genre is integrated with other literary genres in serving the goals of Hebrew

Haskalah: namely, to teach and educate the individual Jew, regardless of his location, so as to improve the lot of the Jewish people.

Romanelli depicts himself thus as bringing Enlightenment to that segment of his people which has not as yet enjoyed the advantages of the modern age. His criteria for disseminating the Enlightenment are undoubtedly based on the ideology and values of Hebrew Haskalah.

Romanelli's writings are different though from any other European travelogue in his involvement as a writer. A concerned and committed writer, Romanelli cannot detach himself from his subject-matter to become a passive bystander who just documents that which he had seen in a travel account.

In his criticism of the phenomena of ignorance among the North African Jews, Romanelli identifies himself with those *maskilim* who were actively engaged in attacking and ridiculing superstitions and nonsensical customs and practices among European Jews.

Like his fellow-*maskilim*, he painfully reproaches his Moroccan co-religionists, demanding necessary changes and advocating the tenets of the Enlightenment, as he appeals to them by the use of the first-person voice. Thus, it is of import to note that Romanelli consciously identifies himself as a *maskil* and makes an effort to portray himself not just as any other fellow-traveler. For he is an involved writer of a travel account, committed to the ideology of Hebrew Haskalah.

In spite of his critical stand, surprisingly, there is an overall sense of unity between the writer, who represents European Jewry, and the North African Jews. He seems to empathize with them and ostensibly feels close to his fellow-Jews. Yet, one notices also the emergence of some tension between Romanelli, the *maskil*, and the culturally and socially inferior inhabitants of North Africa. A European *maskil*, he portrays himself as being superior to both local Jews and non-Jews alike.

Indeed, Romanelli's personality is dominant in *Masa Ba' rav*. As discussed earlier, his apparent lack of generic apprehension for being too 'egotistic' in the presentation of the traveler's personality may be attributed to the changes in literary conventions of the travelogue that have taken place towards the end of the eighteenth century.⁵⁸

Thus, it is essentially Romanelli's story for he is in the center of the travelogue, while everything else is subservient to him. It is Romanelli vis-à-vis the Jews of Morocco: his views of them (p. 6; 30), his reactions to their customs (24; 54–55), his involvement in their affairs (23; 53), and his overwhelming intellectual superiority over the Jewish and non-Jewish natives (36; 70).

As mentioned earlier, Romanelli is never a completely passive onlooker, but he is an active participant in the act of discovery. His unique position of duality as both a European traveler and a Jewish writer is perhaps best illustrated by the episode in which he disguised himself in . . . local Jewish clothes and much to his dismay he is being treated by the Moslems as a local Jew (53; 94). A European to the Moslems, and a stranger—sometimes אַפיקורוס, heretic—to the Jews, to himself he is a *maskil*, and to the reader, Romanelli is a fascinating *picaro*.

It is the story of his hopes and despairs, and his struggle to survive by working as a translator, secretary, and preacher. His personal story, tragically enough, turned out to be the history of the 1790 upheavals against the Moroccan Jewish community. Finally, Romanelli closes his travel account telling of his escape, by the skin of his teeth, so to speak, on a boat going from Morocco to Europe, a utopia in comparison to the North African Barbary.

In light of this personal touch, it should be reiterated that *Masa Ba'ra'v* transcends the boundary of an autobiography, and should not be classified as such. For it is NOT a life story of an individual, as it lacks the major autobiographical ingredients of introspection and retrospection of the self. The emphasis on truth in the introduction, as discussed earlier, is related to the issue of the authenticity of the travel account, rather than to the verity of a life story as presented, for example, by Solomon Maimon or Mordechai Ginzburg in their respective autobiographies.

The critics have already noted Romanelli's impressive mastery of Hebrew in *Masa Ba'ra'v*. As discussed previously concerning landscape description, Romanelli's language is patterned after biblical Hebrew of which he has full command. Not only does he employ biblical vocabulary and syntax, but he also patterns his style after the biblical idiom (3; 26–27. 64; 107–108. 11; 37–38), and quotes abundantly from the Bible (24; 55). He even assumes a prophetic tone as he reproaches the Jews for their superstitious customs (23; 53), and when needed, even employs biblical curses (22; 53). Some of his newly coined expressions are also based on original biblical terms, such as the expression 'bamot yishak' (במות ישחק) to denote 'comedy' (5; 29).

Also frequently patterned in biblical fashion, with distinct parallelism (1; 23. 5; 29), is Romanelli's use of aphorisms, a major characteristic of his style. He also utilizes rhetorical devices such as the rhetorical questions (4; 28. 11; 38. 77; 126), and exclamatory statements (11; 38. 30; 62–63. 39; 75), and he constantly conducts dis-

courses with the reader (1; 23. 18; 47. 66; 110). Figurative language abounds in his writings: metaphors and similes (7; 31. 23; 53) spice this travel account.

Stylistically, it appears that Romanelli's work somewhat deviates from the European generic convention which demanded simplicity of style.⁵⁹

Borrowing from other genres and literary forms has had its impact on Romanelli's style. He utilizes the dialogue very cleverly, citing in parenthesis who spoke to whom (26; 58. 43; 80. 75; 123), and employs the epistolary format to enhance his story (43; 81. 59; 102). From the corpus of medieval Jewish literature, Romanelli borrowed the style of liturgical lamentations as he describes the calamities that befell the Jews of Morocco (81–82; 131–132).

In order to make their writings more interesting and devoid of "the dullness of sheer descriptions," Romanelli, as well as European travel writers,⁶⁰ resorted to the use of humor and anecdotes. It may be inferred that Romanelli's sense of humor and wit helped him survive his ordeal in the regions of North African Barbary, and simultaneously helped the reader enjoy Romanelli's account of the ordeal. His humor is intellectual, and assumes that the reader is as well versed in the Talmud and in the Bible as he is, for it relies heavily on knowledge of the talmudic text (9; 34–35. 33; 66), biblical allusions (62; 105), and biblical puns (47; 85. 57; 98).

Anecdotes and anecdotal materials are interspersed throughout the book. The anecdotes are pungent, brief, concise, and they easily highlight a point, teach a moral, and amuse the reader. For a writer such as Romanelli, who loves to tell a story, anecdotes are an essential component of his narrative, allowing him to make fun of strange, foreign customs, to criticize human follies, and consequently to keep the reader entertained.

In one such anecdote Romanelli tells of a Jewish male who disguised himself as an Arab and was exposed and identified because he was careless enough not to follow the Arabic custom of . . . urinating while in a sitting position (17; 46). Another such story of disguise concerns the storyteller changing his European clothes to the customary local Jewish attire. Upon his final identification with his fellow-Jews, Romanelli assumes their lot and fate as well. He relates how an Arab thereafter hits him, considering him a local butt, but he is now unable to hit back (27; 59). While being entertaining, the anecdote also contains a moral as the storyteller now assumes a full identity as a local Jew and thus shares in his brethren's lot.

In another anecdote, Romanelli portrays himself as superior in his knowledge and intellect to his local hosts (36–37; 70–72); modesty was never one of his strongest characteristics.

In the eighteenth-century, a travel writer was able to characterize himself as either a ‘philosophic traveler,’ a ‘splenetic traveler,’ a ‘sentimental traveler,’ or a ‘picturesque traveler,’—terms designating the writer’s main orientation and inclination. These labels, observes Batten, were not always mutually exclusive, and the splenetic and picturesque traveler served as subclasses of the philosophic and sentimental travelers respectively.⁶¹ If we were to classify Romanelli with any of the above dispositions, the most appropriate designation would be a ‘philosophic traveler’ in that he often displays a perceptive mind. While the European philosophic traveler had “the discoveries of science, the improvement of art, the extension of knowledge” as “the objects of his attention,”⁶² Romanelli is engaged in meditations, observations, and reflections on the character of men (5; 29), the nature of people he met (11; 37. 14; 42), phenomena of religious bigotry (27; 59), and comparison of various religions (16; 44). He also reflects continuously about his own fate (70; 116). At times, one feels some tension between his subjective assessments and his attempts at objective observations of Morocco and its people.

All in all, *Masa Ba’rav* is indeed an artistically crafted travelogue in its selectivity of material, style, and landscape depiction, among its other literary characteristics.

Whether or not this travel account is read like a suspenseful novel, it serves to replace the missing Hebrew novel, which is yet to appear some sixty years later, in its scope, breadth and depth, and in the portrayal of the individual and society. In its literary devices, its story development, characterization, the portrayal of the protagonist, and many other literary traits, Hebrew travel literature may be said to have paved the way for the development of the Hebrew novel, as is the case in European literature.⁶³ This subject, though, merits a separate study.

Although it is, and it should be read as, a travel account, *Masa Ba’rav*, I believe, transcends the mere telling of a travel experience. In a poem that ends his story Romanelli compares his escape from Morocco to that of a sailor miraculously escaping a deadly storm. But rather than consider himself saved, he deems himself running away from the tragedy that happened to his people and from their fate, forsaking and perhaps even betraying them. . . .

Yet, on another level, Romanelli's travel to an Arab land may be construed as a metaphor of a *maskil's* voyage to, and his exposure of, the unenlightened segment of the Jewish people, not only in Morocco, but in other places closer to home.

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

NOTES

1. Charles L. Batten, Jr., *Pleasurable Instruction: Form and Convention in Eighteenth-Century Travel Literature* (Berkeley, 1978), p. 3. This study is confined to English accounts and to those translated into English (Preface, p. xi).
2. There were a number of studies published recently on the Haskalah satire and autobiography. This writer has published studies on the epistolary writings, dialogues of the dead, religious disputations, and dialogues, in addition to papers on satire and autobiography. The current study on Hebrew travelogue is a continuous effort to cover literary genres in Hebrew Enlightenment.
3. *Pleasurable Instruction*, p. ix.
4. *Masa Ba'rav*, the book under study, has been published in nine editions, to this day; an English edition has been published in 1989 by Norman and Yedida Stillman (see note 26, below). On travelogues to Eretz Israel in M. A. Ginzburg's and Kalman Shulman's writings see Tovah Cohen, *Mehalom Limetziut* [from Dream to Reality] (Israel, 1982), pp. 223–255 [Hebrew].
5. See, for example, *Hakluyt Voyages*, ed., Richard David (Boston, 1981), and *Masterworks of Travel & Exploration*, ed., Richard D. Mallery (New York, 1948); see *Pleasurable Instruction*, p. 4.
6. *Pleasurable Instruction*, p. 6.
7. *Ibid.*, in the preface and the introduction.
8. Philip Babcock Gove, *The Imaginary Voyage in Prose Fiction* (New York, 1975), discusses the characteristics of this imaginary travel genre, and cites 215 imaginary travels published in the 18th century. On imaginary voyages to the moon, see Marjorie Hope Nicolson, *Voyages to the Moon* (New York, 1948). One should also distinguish authentic travels that contained lies and false descriptions, and also pseudo-travels. See Percy G. Adams, *Travelers and Travel Liars, 1660–1800* (Berkeley, 1962).
9. See the collection of travelogues in Hebrew edited by Judah David Eisenstein, *Otzar Masa'ot* [Treasure of Travels] (Tel Aviv, 1969), offset edition [Hebrew], and an English anthology, Elkan Nathan Adler, *Jewish Travellers in the Middle Ages: 19 Firsthand Accounts* (New York, 1987).
10. *Pleasurable Instruction*, in the introduction, p. 3: “. . . from Addison and Defoe to Fielding, Smollet, Boswell, and Johnson.” Some travelogues by well-known writers: Henry Fielding, *The Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon* (London, 1795) in *The Complete Works of Henry Fielding*, Vol. 3 (New York, 1902), pp. 159ff; *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Germany and Switzerland, 1794*, ed., F. A. Pottle (London, 1953).

11. The travelogue *Ma'agal Tov* [Good Circle], by Hayim Joseph David Azulay, known by the acronym HIDA, seems to be on the borderline, and should be studied separately as to its affinity to the modern genre.

12. Itzik Euchel, "Igrot Yitzhak Eichel" [Letters of Yitzhak Eichel], *Ha-me'asef*, Vol. 2 (1785), pp. 116–121, 137–142 [Hebrew]. On the affinity of this travelogue to Euchel's fictional epistolary work, entitled "Igrot Meshulam ben Uriyah Ha'eshtemo'i" [the Letters of Meshulam . . .], which is based on fictive travels, see my article "The Beginning of the Epistolary Genre in Modern Hebrew Literature: Isaac Euchel and His Letters," *Biqoret Ufarshanut*, Vol. 16 (1981), pp. 85–101 [Hebrew]. On combining pleasure and instruction in the travelogue, see Batten's *Pleasurable Instruction*, p. 25.

13. Shmuel Romanelli, *Masa Ba'rav* [Travail in an Arab Land] (Berlin, 1792). I am indebted for the translation of the title to Norman and Yedida Stillman (see note 26 below).

14. H. Z. Hirschberg, *Toldot Hayehudim Be'afrika Hatzefonit* [The History of Jews in North Africa], Vol. 2 (Jerusalem, 1965), pp. 292–294 [Hebrew], quotes from Romanelli's testimony in *Masa Ba'rav*; and Hirschberg's book in English, *A History of the Jews in North Africa*, Vol. 2 (Leiden, 1981), pp. 290–291. See also Norman and Yedida Stillman's article on Romanelli cited in note 26 below, and their article "The Jewish Courtier Class in Late Eighteenth-Century Morocco as Seen Through the Eyes of Samuel Romanelli," *The Islamic World from Classical to Modern Times: Essays in Honor of Bernard Lewis* (Princeton, 1989), pp. 845–854.

15. The doctor-traveler William Lempriere visited North Africa at the same time and published his travelogue under the title *A Tour Through the Dominion of the Emperor of Morocco*, 3rd edition (Newport, 1813). See also: William Hutton, *A Voyage to Africa* [. . .] in the year 1820 (London, 1821). On other trips to Morocco, see R. W. Frantz, *The English Traveller and the Movement of Ideas, 1660–1732* (New York, 1968), p. 9.

16. Hayim Schirmann listed and described the nine editions in his study *Shmuel Romanelli, the Poet and the Nomad* (Jerusalem, 1969), Appendix A, pp. 73–74, Offprint from *Perakim*, Vol. 2 [Hebrew]. The ninth edition is Schirmann's, in Romanelli's *Ketavim Nivharim* [Selected Writings] (Jerusalem, 1968), pp. 7–149 [Hebrew]. I, too, listed the editions in my Hebrew article "The Travelogue as a Literary Genre in Hebrew Haskalah," published in *Migvan: Essays and Studies in Honor of Dr. Jacob Kabakoff* (Lod [Israel], 1988), ed., Stanley Nash, in note 11.

17. I review critics assessment of *Masa Ba'rav* in my Hebrew article cited in note 16.

18. We find the terms 'sifrei hamasa'ot' [books of travels] and 'sifrei hamasa' [books of travel] (Klausner, cited in note 19, pp. 315–319); 'sifrei hanesi'ah' [books of traveling] (F. Laḥover, *Toldot Hasifrut Ha'ivrit Haḥadasha* [History of Modern Hebrew Literature], Vol. 1 (Tel Aviv, 1928), p. 109 [Hebrew]; 'sifrei masa'ot' [books of travels] or 'sipurei masa'ot' [travel stories] (Fahn, cited in note 24, pp. 15, 20); another reference is to 'korot masa'o' [happenings, or story, of his trip] and 'sefer tiyuro' [book of his tour] (introduction to the 1926 edition of *Masa Ba'rav*, Warsaw, by I. A. ?); similarly, one finds the expressions 'rishmei masa' [travel impressions] and 'rishmei derech'

[road impressions] (H. N. Shapira, *Toldot Hasifrut Ha'ivrit Haḥadashah* [History of Modern Hebrew Literature], Vol. 1 (Tel Aviv, 1967?, facsimile of 1939? edition), p. 494 [Hebrew], and 'te'ur masa'o' [description of his trip] (Zinberg, cited in note 20, p. 113). See also my article cited in note 16.

19. Joseph Klausner, *Historyah Shel Hasifrut Ha'ivrit Haḥadashah* [History of Modern Hebrew Literature], Vol. 1 (Jerusalem, 1960), pp. 315–319 [Hebrew]. Klausner dismissed Dukes' notion that *Masa Ba'rav* was a work of fiction.

20. Israel Zinberg, *Toldot Sifrut Yisrael* [History of Jewish Literature], Vol. 5 (Tel Aviv, 1959), p. 114 [Hebrew].

21. Avraham Shaanan, *Hasifrut Haivrit Haḥadashah Lizrameah* [Modern Hebrew Literature in Its Currents], Vol. 1 (Tel Aviv, 1962), p. 124 [Hebrew].

22. Zinberg, p. 114; Shaanan, p. 124.

23. Fahn (see note 24), Schirmann, and the Stillmans (see note 26).

24. Reuven Fahn, "Pirkei Haskalah" [Chapters in Haskalah], *Kitvei Re'uvon Fahn* [Writings of R. F.], Vol. 2 (Stanislawów, 1937), pp. 15–25 [Hebrew]. A review of Fahn's monograph on Romanelli appeared in *Gilyonot*, Vol. 6, No. 10 (1968), pp. 275–277 [Hebrew].

25. Hayim Schirmann, "Kovetz Shirei Shmuel Romanelli Bichtav Yad" [S. R.'s Collection of Poems in Manuscript], *Tarbiz*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (1966), pp. 389–394 [Hebrew]; see also Schirmann's study and introduction to Romanelli's *Selected Writings*, cited in note 16 above.

26. Norman A. Stillman and Yedida K. Stillman, "Samuel Romanelli and his *Maṣṣā Ba'rāb*," *Hebrew Annual Review*, Vol. 9 (1985), pp. 343–354. See their other articles cited in the bibliography, p. 354, and their translation of and introduction to Samuel Romanelli's *Travail in an Arab Land* (Tuscaloosa, 1989).

27. *Masa Ba'rav*, in the unpaginated introduction in the first edition (cited in note 13 above), and pp. 21–22 in Schirmann's edition (cited in note 16). The quotations from the introduction will be given without citing the page numbers. An interest in Jews in localities which he visited is exhibited by Euchel in his Hebrew travelogue (see note 12 above), p. 118. Lempriere, too, manifests an interest in Moroccan Jews. See: *A Tour [. . .] Through Morocco*, pp. 61, 171–187.

28. *Pleasurable Instruction*, p. 14.

29. Adams, *Travelers and Travel Liars*, p. 1.

30. See *Pleasurable Instruction*, p. 49, and our discussion below next to note 41.

31. At the end of the book Romanelli endeavors to document his report about the 1790 pogroms perpetrated against the Jews in Morocco, stating that he had submitted the manuscript to the publishers (David Friedlander and Isaac Euchel [see note 12], who headed the press of the Hebrew Enlightenment in Berlin). See *Masa Ba'rav*, p. 90; p. 144 [Quotations are from the first edition in 1792; following the semi-colon, the second pagination is from the Schirmann's 1968 edition; this dual pagination will be used throughout this article].

32. *Pleasurable Instruction*, p. 5, and see below note 45 and related text.

33. 13:1—"The burden of Babylon, which Isaiah the son of Amoz did see."

22:1—"The burden concerning the Valley of Vision." 21:1-2—"The burden of the wilderness of the sea[. . .]A grievous vision is declared unto me."

34. *Pirkei Haskalah*, Vol. 2, p. 15.

35. *Toldot Hasifrut Ha'ivrit Hahadashah*, p. 494.

36. *Hasifrut Ha'ivrit Hahadashah Lizramehah*, Vol. 1, p. 124.

37. *Ezekiel 27:20, Masa Ba'rav*, p. 49; 87.

38. See note 26, and notes 13 and 14.

39. Schirmann, *Shmuel Romanelli: The Poet and the Nomad*, pp. 13-14.

40. See *Pleasurable Instruction*, pp. 25-28.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 49. See note 30, above, and related text.

42. Lempriere, *A Tour[. . .]of Morocco*, "Advertisement to the First Edition."

43. *Pleasurable Instruction*, pp. 132-133, note 54.

44. See note 21 and related text.

45. See note 32 and related text, and my articles "On the Essence of Hebrew Autobiography, Study of *Aviezer* by Mordechai Aharon Ginzburg," *Had'oar*, Vol. 62, No. 10 (1983), pp. 156-157 [Hebrew], and "The Literary Genre of the Autobiography in Hebrew Enlightenment Literature: Mordechai Ginzburg's 'Aviezer,'" *Modern Judaism*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (1990), pp. 159-169.

46. On the title page of the original edition, omitted from Schirmann's edition.

47. See *Pleasurable Instruction*, p. 59.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 63.

49. Translated roughly as "and they traveled, and they stopped." See, for example, "Igrot Yitzhak Eichel," p. 139: "and we went on our way to a village Trontz (fourth stop), and from there to Elbing (fifth stop)."

50. *Masa Ba'rav*, pp. 2; 24.

51. *A Tour[. . .]of Morocco*, p. 59.

52. *Masa Ba'rav*, pp. 3-5; 26-29 (Tangiers).

53. See explanation of pagination in note 31.

54. In my expanded Hebrew article on *Masa Ba'rav*, cited in note 16, I study Romanelli's use of the *Melitzah*, the euphuistic mode, comparing his depiction of lunch to some others in contemporary Hebrew Haskalah, including Euchel's travelogue, as well as in Lempriere's travelogue. I also point out the nature of borrowing of biblical phrases by Romanelli.

55. *Masa Ba'rav*, pp. 2; 25. 5; 29. 49; 87. 63; 106.

56. Schirmann, "[. . .]*The Poet and the Nomad*, p. 22, citing Sh. Schiller. See *Masa Ba'rav*, pp. 21; 51. 29; 62. 33-34; 66-67. 68; 113. 1; 23. 16; 45. 40; 76.

57. *Pleasurable Instruction*, p. 14, cites a study by Clark S. Northup.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 13. See also notes 30 and 41, and their related texts.

59. *Ibid.*, p. 45.

60. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

61. *Ibid.*, p. 72.

62. *Ibid.*

63. Percy G. Adams, *Travel Literature and the Evolution of the Novel* (Lexington, 1983).