

*The German-or-Yiddish Controversy within the  
Haskalah and the European “Dialogue of the Dead”:  
Tuvyah Feder’s Kol Mehāzezim versus Mendel  
Lefin’s Translation of the Book of Proverbs*

BY MOSHE PELLI

INTRODUCTION

The inclination of the first Hebrew *maskilim* [enlighteners] in Germany to adhere to either pure Hebrew or pure German and their opposition to the use of Yiddish has been accepted by most scholars.<sup>1</sup> Apparently, some *maskilim* deviated from the norm, as manifested in the German-Yiddish controversy that became a literary dispute between two well-known *maskilim*, Tuvyah Feder (1760–1817) and Mendel Lefin (1749–1826). Tuvyah Feder wrote his satiric *Kol Mehāzezim* (*The Voice of the Archers*) in 1813; it is, in effect, a diatribe against Mendel Lefin’s translation into Yiddish of the Book of Proverbs.

The Feder-Lefin dispute signals the emergence of a debate among Germany’s *maskilim* concerning whether the Hebrew Haskalah, which started as a movement of and for the élite, should reformulate its Enlightenment goals in more populist terms, aiming its general enterprise at the masses. Was the movement to continue catering to those *maskilim* who had adopted their aesthetic standards from German culture and were demanding a use of the German language, in all its purity? Or was it to abandon such a linguistic ideal for the sake of a practical need to translate biblical books into Yiddish, the common language used by the Jewish masses in Eastern Europe?

Tuvyah Feder continued to express the viewpoint of the early Haskalah in Germany; in the matter of biblical translation, he seemed to be a dedicated disciple of Moses Mendelssohn, arguing that literary German should be used for such translation rather than Yiddish. Like the German *maskilim*, he considered the latter language used, for example, by Polish Jews, to be a corrupt form of German. Most of the early *maskilim* in Germany knew German, were familiar with German culture,

<sup>1</sup>I distinguish between Hebrew *maskilim* who created mostly in Hebrew and those whose intellectual and creative energies were mostly in German. The Hebrew *maskilim* rejected the use of Yiddish, either by traditionalists or East European Jews, which they considered a faulty language, as compared to German or Hebrew.

On Hebrew during the Haskalah, see Moshe Pelli, *Dor Hame’asfim Beshahar Hahaskalah* (*The Circle of Hame’asef Writers at the Dawn of the Haskalah*), Tel Aviv 2001. A Hebrew version of the present article appears in my book *Sugot Vesugyot Besifrut Hahaskalah Ha’ivrit* (*Genres of Haskalah Literature: Types and Topics*), Tel Aviv 1999.

and tried to adhere to German cultural goals. Many of them were bilingual, and they did not indicate the presence of any tension between the Hebrew and German languages—only between the use of proper German and the use of Yiddish. As indicated, Lefin's translation into Yiddish signals a later development within the Haskalah aiming the movement's resources and efforts at the masses. On the surface, Feder was fully loyal to Mendelssohn's school; he does not directly raise the issue of the Haskalah's overall orientation towards populism or elitism. His view of Lefin's translation as corrupt is presented as an indisputable premise.

### THE DIALOGUE OF THE DEAD AS A LITERARY GENRE

The vehicle that Feder used to express his criticism was a so-called dialogue of the dead, one of the most popular literary genres in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century French, English and German literatures. Taking manifold forms—satirical, religious and philosophical, political, biographical—hundreds of such dialogues were published during this period. A list of some five hundred were compiled for German literature alone. The genre was already manifest in the dialogues of the second-century satirist Lucian, and literary scholars have examined the impact translations of these texts had on its subsequent development in the work of writers such as Bernard Fontenelle and François Fenelon in France, George Lyttleton and Henry Fielding in England, and David Fassmann and Christoph Wieland in Germany.<sup>2</sup> Fassmann is considered the author who introduced the genre into German literature, in his long dialogues published between 1718 and 1739.<sup>3</sup> However, the genre's more prominent and long-lasting influence is owed to Wieland, who translated Lucian into German starting in 1780 and published his own *Dialogues in the Elysium* in 1800.<sup>4</sup>

The dialogues of the dead left their mark on the literature of the Haskalah much after the genre's high-point in European literature. Its first manifestation in Hebrew was Aaron Wolfsohn's *Sihah Be'ereetz Hahayim* (*Dialogue in the Land of the Living* [Afterlife]), published in *Hane'asef* from 1794 to 1797.<sup>5</sup> Several other Hebrew dialogues were also published, some of them satiric—including Feder's *Kol Mehazezim*. Published in 1793, Joseph Ha'efrati's dialogue *Alon Bachut* (*Oak of Weeping*) was in a very different vein, being an elegiac treatment of the death of Rabbi

<sup>2</sup>On the dialogues of the dead, see Benjamin Boyce, 'News from Hell', *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, vol. 58 (1943), pp. 402–437; John W. Cosentini, *Fontenelle's Art of Dialogues*, New York 1952; Frederick M. Keener, *English Dialogues of the Dead*, New York 1973; John Rutledge, *The Dialogue of the Dead in Eighteenth-Century Germany*, Berne–Frankfurt am Main 1974. Boyce lists some two hundred texts—not all dialogues—taking place in the world of the dead. Keener has a selective list of 277 dialogues, and Rutledge, p. 129 and in the appendix, lists about 500 German dialogues.

<sup>3</sup>Rutledge, pp. 27ff.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 86–87. See Christoph Martin Wieland, 'Gespräche im Elysium' in *idem*, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 27, Leipzig 1839, pp. 389–421. For an eighteenth-century English rendition of Wieland's translation of Lucian into German, accompanied by an introduction, see *Lucian of Samosata. From the Greek. With The Comments and Illustrations of Wieland*, London 1820. Wieland (Introduction, p. xii) asserts that Lucian established this genre, combining Socratic dialogue with Aristophanian drama.

<sup>5</sup>[Aaron Wolfsohn], '*Sihah Be'ereetz Hahayim*', in *Hane'asef*, vol. 7, (1794–1797), pp. 53–67, 120–153, 203–228, 279–298. I discuss Wolfsohn's text in *Sugot*, pp. 48–72.

Yehezkel Landau. There were also didactic dialogues of the dead, such as Shlomo Löwisohn's *Sīḥah Be'olam Haneshamot* (*Dialogue in the World of the Souls*) focused on the Hebrew language (1811) and Juda Mises's dialogue of the same title, included in his *Kīn'e at Ha'emet* (*Zeal for the Truth*) (1828).<sup>6</sup> Works in this genre in various European languages and Hebrew continued to be published throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century.<sup>7</sup>

One can gain insight into the emergence of Hebrew dialogues of the dead by examining both their counterparts in the Western European languages and their cultural, social, and political backdrop. Critics hypothesise that dialogues come into literary vogue in times of historical upheaval, thus reflecting the unfolding of profound spiritual change. This would seem to hold true for the German, French, and English dialogues of the dead, which received their enthusiastic reception in a time of religious decline and loss of faith. Readers are no longer fearful of any punishment after death and thus feel free to enjoy this genre with few inhibitions.<sup>8</sup> With the Haskalah marking the start of a major transformation in modern Jewish cultural history, this theory would seem to apply as well to the dialogues of the dead in Haskalah literature.

For John Cosentini, the European dialogue of the dead serves as a weather vane for whatever ideological conditions surround its writing.<sup>9</sup> Other scholars have asserted that the genre's popularity was largely due to the eighteenth-century interest in subjects such as the existence of spirits, the afterlife, and immortality of the soul, as well as legends about an entrance to hell putatively found in Ireland.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, it is important not to forget that the inherent literary worth of these texts would have contributed as much as such ideological and thematic concerns to the popular interest in them. In light of all these factors, it becomes clear that although the emergence of such an esoteric literary form in literature of the Haskalah may seem odd to the modern reader, it appeared natural, relevant and attractive to readers of the time. For one thing, the *maskilim* had a strong interest in the themes of death and immortality—an interest intensified by Moses Mendelssohn's highly influential book on the immortality of the soul, *Phaedon*, published in German in 1767 and in Hebrew in 1787.<sup>11</sup> The *maskilim* were likewise engaged in an intense controversy over the

<sup>6</sup>Joseph Ha'efrati, *Alon Bachut*, Vienna 1793; Shlomo Löwisohn, *Sīḥah Be'olam Haneshamot*, in *Hame'asef*, vols. 9 and 10 (1810–1811); Juda Mises, *Kīn'e at Ha'emet*, Vienna 1828. Meir Halevi Alter published his own *Sīḥah* in *Bikurei Ha'itim* (*First Fruits of the Times*), vol. 6 (1825–1826), pp. 5–24. A shorter *sīḥah* by Itzik Aurbach was published in *Hame'asef*, vol. 8, no. 1 (1809), pp. 93–95.

<sup>7</sup>*Sīḥot* [plural of *Sīḥah*] were published by Peretz Smolenskin (in *Hashaḥar* [*Dawn*], vol. 1, no. 3 (1869), p. 28); Judah Leib Gordon (*ibid.* vol. 8 (1877), pp. 205–225); as did Yaakov Sobel, *Haḥozeh Hezyonot Be'arba'ah Olamot* (*He Who Sees Visions in Four Worlds*), Odessa 1872; In 1988, J. H. Biletzki published a dialogue of the dead in Hebrew, *Mifgshim Mehasug Hasifrut* (*Encounters of the Literary Kind*), Tel Aviv 1988.

<sup>8</sup>Boyce, p. 407 (citing J. S. Egilsrud) and Rutledge, p. 19 (citing Rudolph Herzle).

<sup>9</sup>Cosentini, p. 19.

<sup>10</sup>See Boyce, p. 405; Keener, p. 8. On the concept of the Garden of Eden in the Kabbalah, see Moshe Idel, 'Hamasa Legan Eden: Gilgulav Shel Motiv Mehamitos Hayevani Liteḥum Hayahadut' ('The Voyage to the Garden of Eden: the Transformation of a Motif from the Greek Mythology to the Realm of Judaism'), in *Mehkerei Yerushalayim Befolklor Yehudi* 2, Jerusalem 1982, pp. 7–16.

<sup>11</sup>Moshe Midessau (Moses of Dessau; Mendelssohn), *Phaedon Hu Sefer Hasharav Hanefesh* (*Phaedon, A Book on Immortality of the Soul*), Berlin 1787. Wolfsohn, in his *Sīḥah*, pp. 204–205, notes that Mendelssohn's words were cited from the German edition of *Phaedon* as spoken by Socrates.

burial of the dead, supporting the delayed burial as demanded by the authorities as opposed to the Jewish custom of immediate burial upon death which the traditionalists desired to follow. Their articles on the subject occupied many pages in *Hame'asef* while also being published as separate pamphlets.

Like many of the other genres, this genre, too, attests to the orientation of Haskalah literature towards contemporary European literatures especially in Germany, and their various styles and genres, which they attempted to emulate. Indeed, this genre was part and parcel of the cultural and spiritual milieu of the intellectual elite, and its adoption was emblematic of the desire of the authors of Haskalah to integrate into the spiritual and cultural climate of European Enlightenment.

A study of this literary genre, as part of the endeavour to map and analyse the literary genres of early Hebrew Haskalah, will enrich our knowledge and understanding of this literature, and provide much-needed insight into its aesthetic and literary perception. In addition, insight may be gained into the relationship between Hebrew and European literatures, and the interconnection between this genre and some others which this author has discussed elsewhere, such as satire, travelogues and so on.

Some of the Hebrew dialogues of the dead were discussed previously by Shmuel Werses as part of his work on Haskalah satire, especially the impact of Lucian's satire on Hebrew satire. Afterwards, Friedlander discussed Wolfssohn's Dialogue of the Dead also as part of Haskalah satire. This was the first time in Hebrew criticism that the dialogues of the dead were discussed as a unique genre.<sup>12</sup>

Haskalah literature was strongly orientated towards developments in contemporary Western European literature—especially in Germany. With the genre firmly entrenched in the cultural and spiritual milieu of Europe's intellectual élite, its adoption by Haskalah authors reflects their desire to share the cultural climate of the European Enlightenment.

## DIALOGUES OF THE DEAD AND OTHER LITERARY DIALOGUES

In a general manner, dialogues of the dead are rooted in classical mythology and the classical philosophical dialogue. The genre's more modern form was in debt to literature treating, for instance, imaginary voyages, letters from hell, visits to the netherworld, and conversations between the living and the dead.<sup>13</sup> At the same time,

<sup>12</sup>The kernel of this article was originally delivered as a lecture at the Eighth World Congress of Jewish Studies in 1981, and it was published in the proceedings of the congress, *Divrei Hacongress Ha'olami Shashmini Lemada'ei Hayahadut (Proceedings of the Eighth World Congress of Jewish Studies)*, vol. III Jerusalem 1982. It was also published in *Hado'ar* in 1982. An early version of this article was published first in Hebrew in my book *Sugot Vesugyot Besifrut Hahaskalah Ha'ivrit*. Also see Shmuel Werses, 'Hedei Hasatirah Shel Lucian Besifrut Hahaskalah Ha'ivrit' ('Echoes of Lucian's Satire in Hebrew Haskalah Literature'), in *Bikoret Ufarshanut (Criticism and Interpretation)*, vols. 11–12 (1978), pp. 84–119; reprinted in *idem, Megamot Vetzurot Besifrut Hahaskalah (Trends and Forms in Haskalah Literature)*, Jerusalem 1990, pp. 223–248. Also see Yehuda Friedlander, *Perakim Basatirah Ha'ivrit Beshilhei Hame'ah Ha-18 Begermanyah (Chapters in Hebrew Satire at the End of the 18th Century in Germany)*, Tel Aviv 1980, pp. 121–200.

<sup>13</sup>See sources cited in note 2.

typical features of other forms of literary dialogues—features that eighteenth century authors found particularly attractive—are naturally at work in the dialogues of the dead as well. Hence the present-tense of the dialogic form, along with its inherent compactness—due to the absence of superfluous material—conveys a sense of immediacy and authenticity; the form is thus inclined towards dialectic contrast and a presentation of ideas from varying perspectives. Because of this conceptual and formal variability literary dialogues have great didactic potential.<sup>14</sup>

It stands to reason, then, that a dialogue, whether dramatic or satirical, is more than a conversation or just two monologues following each other. The dialogue form has its own rhythm and the participants have their own style, sentence structure, and rhetorical devices which characterise each speaker individually. The dialogues of the dead possess all these characteristics except that they take place in the other world and therefore also allow for the possibility of dialogues among the dead from different historical periods searching for true knowledge, a quality that was already mentioned in *The Dialogues of Plato*.<sup>15</sup>

In a comment on *Gulliver's Travels*, Samuel Johnson observes that once an author has thought of making the dead speak to each other, the rest is easy enough.<sup>16</sup> In this respect, one thing that dialogues of the dead can do far more easily than other literary genres is call upon distinguished historical figures from various times and countries to debate contemporary issues, express learned opinion, at times pass judgment. Within the limits of historical credibility, the author here enjoys full poetic licence, none of the dead being in a position to complain of the portrait painted of them.<sup>17</sup>

Indeed, they may express their authoritative views unequivocally on contemporary controversies. The ability to discuss issues and to pass judgment on matters related to both this world and the world-to-come is typical of this genre, which is located in the place of judgment, the world of ultimate peace and truth. Taking place in *Olam Ha'emet* ("world of truth" or afterlife), the dialogues tend to be quite intriguing and more open than in this world, free, as it were, from the shackles of earthly conventions and customs. Thus, the views expressed in these dialogues retain an air of ultimate truth, supported by an ostensible stamp of authority. Although the dialogues take place in the other world, they clearly focus on matters related to this world.

The dialogues may be satirical, such as the Lucian dialogues, or ethical and philosophical. As the modern genre evolved, other forms of dialogues emerged: historical, political, biographical, philosophical, and religious, that contributed to the enrichment of the genre.

<sup>14</sup>See Pelli, *Sugot*, pp. 48–52; 91–93.

<sup>15</sup>In the "Apology" Socrates says: "But if death is the journey to another place, and there, as men say, all the dead abide. ... What would not a man give if he might converse with Orpheus ... and Homer? ... I shall then be able to continue my search into true and false knowledge; as in this world, so also in the next; and I shall find out who is wise, and who pretends to be wise, and is not. ... What infinite delight would there be in conversing with them and asking them questions.", see "Apology", *The Dialogues of Plato*, II, transl. by B. Jowett, London 1931, p. 134.

<sup>16</sup>Keener, p. 11.

<sup>17</sup>Those still living may, of course, complain on their behalf, as was in fact the case with several readers who campaigned against *Hame'asef* and its editor's portrayal of characters in *Sifah Be'erez Hahayim*, accusing him of taking liberties in his dialogue and misrepresenting the characters. See *Hame'asef*, vol. 7, no. 4 (1797), pp. 299–360.

## KOL MEHAZEZIM

Published in the wake of Wolfssohn's *Sihah Be'eretz Hahayim*, Tuvyah Feder's *Kol Meḥazezīm* is the second Hebrew dialogue of the dead. Feder could not publish this satire during his lifetime because of the interference by the *maskilim*, led by Yaakov Shmuel Byk;<sup>18</sup> it was only published posthumously forty years after its writing, in 1853, a second edition appearing twenty-two years later. This work was discussed in 1978 by Werses as part of his study of Haskalah satire.<sup>19</sup>

In 1981, Yehuda Friedlander published an annotated version of a manuscript of *Kol Meḥazezīm* that was copied by an anonymous *maskil* in 1830.<sup>20</sup> Friedlander characterised this satire as exemplifying “*riv haleshonot*”, the language conflict between Hebrew and Yiddish.<sup>21</sup> Unfortunately this manuscript, which is located in the New York Public Library, represents a version that deviates from the printed text.

At the centre of *Kol Meḥazezīm* is Feder's acrimonious critique of Lefin's translation of Proverbs, which was published in 1813. Feder argues that Lefin's translation is inferior and corrupt because it deviates from Mendelssohn's school of *be'ur*, the Haskalah project of biblical translation into German and biblical commentary, and from that school's adherence to grammatically correct and idiomatic German. Indeed, Feder goes so far as to assert that Lefin's translation is in effect a translation into Yiddish, thus following in the footsteps of earlier Yiddish translations that had been severely criticised by Mendelssohn.

The first part of *Kol Meḥazezīm* consists of a four-page diatribe against Lefin's translation; the second part is in effect Feder's dialogue of the dead. Feder “recruits” some of the leading Haskalah figures, headed by Moses Mendelssohn, as the dialogue's major protagonists. He is here most likely following in the footsteps of Wolfssohn's *siḥah*, in which Mendelssohn plays a central role. Feder was also probably influenced by Löwisohn's didactic *siḥah*, in which the noted *maskil*-grammarian Joel Brill-Loewe (1760–1802), an active member of the circle of *Hame'asef*'s writers, converses with the medieval grammarian and Bible commentator David Kimḥi on

<sup>18</sup>Byk's letter to Feder, dated *Tevet* 1815 and published in *Kerem Hemed*, vol. 1 (1833), pp. 96–99, attempts to dissuade the author from publishing his book because it attacks Mendel Lefin “with invectives not related to the criticism”. Byk suggests that Feder apologise to Lefin. Feder indicates in reply that he is willing to burn the manuscript if he is compensated for the printing expenses, and argues conversely that the injuries he has inflicted on Lefin are done by a “loving person” (*ibid.*, pp. 99–102). For a description of the controversy among the *maskilim* and a discussion of Feder's editions of *Kol Meḥazezīm*, see Joseph Klausner, *Historiah Shel Hasifrut Ha'avit Hahadashah* (*History of Modern Hebrew Literature*), vol. 1, third edn., Jerusalem 1960, pp. 239–246. Additional discussions on this issue may be found in Werses, *Megamot Vetzvot Besifrut Hahaskalah*, pp. 110–159, 338–355; Simḥah Katz, ‘Targumei Tanach Me'et M. M. Lefin MiSatanov’, (‘Biblical Translations by M.M. Lefin of Satanov’), in *Kiryath Sepher*, vol. XVI, no. 1 (1939), pp. 114–133, especially p. 114; A[vraham] M[eir] Habermann, *Masechet Sofrim Vesifrut* (*Tractate on Authors and Literature*), Jerusalem 1977, pp. 30–40.

<sup>19</sup>See Werses, ‘Hedei Hasatirah’.

<sup>20</sup>Yehuda Friedlander, ‘Tuvyah Gutmann Feder—Kol Meḥazezīm, in *Zehut*, vol. 1 (1981), pp. 275–303.

<sup>21</sup>*idem*, ‘Riv Haleshonot Bemizrah Eiropan Beresheetah Shel Hame'ah Hatesha Esreh’ (‘The Language Conflict in Eastern Europe in the Beginning of the 19th Century’), in *Min Hakatedra* (*Ex Cathedra*) (1981), pp. 5–34. Both the annotated text and this article appear in *idem*, *Bemisterei Hasatirah* (*In the Hiding of Satire*), Ramat Gan 1984, pp. 13–75. *Kol Meḥazezīm* was discussed earlier by Shmuel Werses in his article ‘Hedei Hasatirah’.

Hebrew grammar. In spite of the resemblances to Wolfssohn's *siḥah*, that of Lefin is markedly different from it in its concentration on a single topic, namely the quality of biblical translation, whereas the earlier dialogue covered many important Haskalah topics.

As mentioned above, Friedlander attempted to view this literary piece as heralding the language dispute between Hebrew and Yiddish. However, that dispute in fact only emerged at the end of the nineteenth century and is related to a late phenomenon of the tension between the languages, which was not prevalent in the second decade of the nineteenth century, the time of the actual writing of this dialogue.

As already mentioned, the Feder-Lefin controversy revolves around the question of whether the Haskalah should orientate itself towards the masses, through the use of Yiddish, or towards a Jewish cultural élite, through the use of German. Feder maintains Mendelssohn's position—that embodying the early Haskalah in Germany—advocating the consistent use of German. The use of dialogues of the dead for internal maskilic dispute was a new phenomenon, although there had been various other disputes among *maskilim*, sometimes heated in nature, such as the disputes between Wolfssohn and Satanow, between Feder himself and Wolfssohn, and between Naḥman ben Simḥa and the editors of *Hame'asef*.<sup>22</sup> There also appears to have been some considerable tension between Naphtali Hartwig Wessely and Isaac Euchel.<sup>23</sup> It was only natural that such disputes would be expressed in a literary medium when breaking out between literati—to the general enrichment of Hebrew literature.

#### AN INVECTIVE INTRODUCTION TO FEDER'S DIALOGUE

The text's introductory exposition occupies approximately four of its the sixteen pages. Replete with redundancy and verbiage and at times rhymed, it addresses Feder's adversary directly in an invective critique of his translation. The aesthetic and linguistic criteria to which Feder appeals are, as indicated, those of Mendelssohn and his school of biblical exegetes and translators. In this manner, no ideological revelation need be introduced in the following dialogue; but the reader's curiosity is aroused regarding the *method* Feder will use to attack Lefin's translation.

The introduction was intended by Feder to create covert ties to and a backdrop for the actual dialogue, thus creating a framework for the ensuing dialogue. Likewise,

<sup>22</sup>See Naḥman ben Simḥa, *Ein Mishpat* [Fountain of Justice], Berlin 1796, pp. 4–5, and his harsh attack on the editors of *Hame'asef*, especially Wolfssohn, who, in turn, attributed its authorship to Satanow. Feder's own dispute with Wolfssohn and Satanow had its literary representation in his book *Lahat Haḥerev* (*The Fiery Sword*), Vilna 1867, originally published in 1804. See also Pinḥas Argosi de Silva [Baruch Jeteiles], *Sefer Ha'orev* (*Book of the Ambusher*), Saloniki [?] 1795, pp. 2a–2b, and his criticism of the editors of *Hame'asef*.

<sup>23</sup>For Wessely vs. Euchel, see Moshe Pelli, *The Age of Haskalah*, p. 194, note 11.

such an introductory exposition was used by some authors of dialogues of the dead to explain how they got hold of the dialogues, which purportedly had taken place in the other world. However, in Lucian's thirty classical dialogues there is no frame story nor any attempt to explain how the author came by these writings in this world.<sup>24</sup> In this unique genre, the reader is expected to acknowledge the literary convention that these dialogues took place in another realm, either in hell, in Eden, or in any other supernatural world. He is not expected to ask questions.<sup>25</sup>

Apart from having the purpose of explaining how authors obtained the dialogues, the introductory expository frameworks were also sometimes used to foreshadow two motifs in the dialogue linked to the topic of death. The first of these centres on the fact that Mendelssohn could not complete his project of translating the Bible in his lifetime; in his wisdom and foresight, Feder explains, he had assembled a group of *maskilim* and prepared them for the completion of the task.<sup>26</sup> Like many *maskilim* before him, Feder here employs imagery equating Moses Mendelssohn with the original Moses, thus relating Moses's bestowal of the Torah on the Israelites to Mendelssohn's translation of and commentary on the Torah. Both the earlier and later Moses are portrayed as sweetening the bitter water so that the Israelites might drink it (Ex. 15:23–25), and as planting and cultivating a vineyard so that in time it will bear fruit.<sup>27</sup> The second anticipatory passage appears at the end of the introduction where Feder turns to his adversary, Lefin, urging him to go out and collect copies of his book to bury or burn them. By this act, Feder suggests, Lefin will cleanse himself, so that he may now wear clean instead of soiled clothing. Feder then asks Lefin rhetorically how he will face his creator on the day of judgment, and what he will say to the inhabitants of Eden—to Mendelssohn and his students.<sup>28</sup>

These examples of foreshadowing are somewhat misleading. For even if Feder would have liked to see his adversary in the other world, at the time of the writing, Lefin was still very much alive (he died in 1826). Thus, the author could not have brought him to the other world even in a fictional work, unless he were to write a dialogue between the living and the dead. In the dialogue itself, Lefin is not even allowed to defend himself, the deliberations and argumentation being conducted on the basis of criteria established by the first generation of *maskilim* without any serious attempt to defend Lefin's way of translating. As the substitution for a defence, Feder

<sup>24</sup>Lucian's classical dialogues have no introductory framework, the reader being expected to simply acknowledge the other-worldly locus. This is the case as well with the dialogues of Fontenelle, Lytton, Wieland and Matthew Prior; see also Rutledge, p. 16.

<sup>25</sup>The same applies to the dialogues of Fontenelle, Lytton and Wieland. See *Lucian's Dialogues*, transl. by Howard Williams, London 1900, pp. 86–167 and 'Conferences of the Dead', in Wieland, *Lucian of Samosata*, comments [by]: Wieland edited by William Tooke, vol. 1, London 1920, pp. 382–443; Bernard Fontenelle, *Nouveaux Dialogues des Morts*, edited by Jean Dagen, Paris 1971; George Lytton, *Dialogues of the Dead*, London 1760; facsimile edn., New York 1970; Wieland, 'Gespräche im Elysium', pp. 389–421; see also Matthew Prior's dialogues, *The Literary Works of Matthew Prior*, London 1959, pp. 599–663. See also Rutledge, p. 16.

<sup>26</sup>Tuvyah Feder, *Kol Mehazezim*, Lemberg 1853, p. 14; *ibid.*, Lemberg, 1875, p. 10. Henceforth the two editions will be cited by page numbers alone, in the above order.

<sup>27</sup>*ibid.* See Moshe Pelli, *Moshe Mendelssohn: Bechavlei Masoret (Moses Mendelssohn: Bonds of Tradition)*, Tel Aviv 1972, pp. 91–94.

<sup>28</sup>p. 15; p. 11.



cites an approbation of the translation by another writer of the old school, Reb Elyakim Melamed ben Jacob Schatz, whose book *Melamed Si'ah* (*Teaching Dialogue*) contains the translation into Yiddish of words and passages from the Torah and the “five scrolls”. But this approbation itself constituted incriminating testimony in the eyes of the *maskilim*; it is intended as a device for ridiculing both Lefin and Elyakim Melamed—the latter figure serving as a substitute for Lefin himself.

Feder’s dialogue is different from Wolfssohn’s in several respects with possible relevance for the genre’s development in Hebrew literature. To begin, Feder’s presentation of his characters at the start of the dialogue, as if they were acting in a play, is an innovation. The presentation is in order of appearance, with verbs and adverbs used to describe the characters’ action, the sequence of events, and the flow of time. Wessely, for instance, arrives “reciting a poem” while Euchel is “approaching”, Brill “following him” and “[Judah Loeb] Ben Ze’ev being the last one”.<sup>29</sup> Connected to this, Feder describes his characters’ actions much more extensively than does Wolfssohn in his *sihah*. Thus, as Wessely approaches, Feder inserts a parenthetical statement functioning as something like stage directions: “[NHW approaches, reciting a poem as he walks]”.<sup>30</sup> Such statements can occupy a few lines of smaller print, at times in parentheses, as in the following example: “[Moshe Hayim] Luzzatto, Menashe ben Israel, Mendelssohn and Wessely are strolling in Eden towards the Lord of Glory, and behold Euchel is approaching and he seems enraged; Wessely was happy to see him and he greeted him”.<sup>31</sup> Euchel, we learn, is very angry about the inept translation of the Book of Proverbs—a book that he had in fact himself translated.<sup>32</sup> “(Euchel is an arrow’s throw away, he walked and sat across [from the others], crying for the great calamity that befell this generation, and Wessely returned to his place [next to the others] to rejoice in love together with Moses [Mendelssohn], his chosen one, and with the sages that were with him)”.<sup>33</sup> This sort of description is also manifest in the following shorter passage: “(They came to the gate and the cherubim were looking at his [Joel Brill’s] face, and observing that he was happy and content, they opened [the gate for him])”.<sup>34</sup>

To make *Kol Mehazezim* more interesting and colourful, Feder incorporates some action between the fragments of the dialogues, which are generally not as long as those in Wolfssohn’s *sihah* (sometimes consisting of long monologues). Characters come and go; Mendelssohn and Wessely expel their colleague, Euchel, to the far end of Eden because he has cursed the sage (*hacham*) Mendel Lefin;<sup>35</sup> Brill is visible as he draws near,<sup>36</sup> followed by Ben Ze’ev,<sup>37</sup> who later faints upon hearing Mendelssohn’s harsh words. Ben Ze’ev is asked to read Lefin’s translation of Proverbs, which he

<sup>29</sup> pp. 15–16; pp. 11–12.

<sup>30</sup> p. 16; p. 12. Some of the descriptions are in brackets while the longer ones are in parentheses.

<sup>31</sup> p. 18; p. 14.

<sup>32</sup> *Mishlei*, transl. by Isaac Euchel, Berlin 1789. See also Euchel’s *Darhei No’am* (*Pleasant Ways*), Dessau 1804.

<sup>33</sup> p. 19; p. 15.

<sup>34</sup> pp. 21–22; p. 18.

<sup>35</sup> p. 20; p. 16.

<sup>36</sup> p. 21; p. 17.

<sup>37</sup> p. 22; p. 19.

holds in his hands.<sup>38</sup> Duma, the overseer of the lower section of the other world, is instructed by Mendelssohn to bring the author of *Melamed Si'ah* from the underworld; he does so in order that he testify in Mendelssohn's court, then taking him back to his abode.<sup>39</sup>

Taken together, these passages connect various components of the dialogue and contribute towards its narrative synchronisation. The passages help clarify the psychological situation and feelings of the dialogue's characters—for instance, “and his heart foretold him that his time has come”<sup>40</sup>—offering a comment on both their cultural and spiritual condition. Interestingly, at one point—towards the dialogue's end—there is a merger of a dialogical exchange with a piece of narrative itself containing dialogue. In other words, the author abandons his dialogue, embarking on a narrative that contains fragmentary statements presented in direct speech:

And Duma hurried up and took it [the book] and gave it to him and said: raise your voice so that you will become known to all the inhabitants of Eden. The [author of] *Melamed Si'ah* called and screamed till his voice became hoarse and his eyes bulged, and before the sun set he had read it from beginning to end, and he was happy, jumping, hopping, and leaping, and he said: now I know that my wisdom is still alive, this is my Torah [teaching].<sup>41</sup>

Feder does not describe manners of speech in the “stage directions” as Wolfsohn does. Instead, actions are described in the fragmentary connecting narratives. In comparison to Wolfsohn's own *siḥah*, in the *siḥah* of Feder Wessely's speeches and poetical discourse mark an exception to the general brevity of the dialogic exchanges. In this respect, both in their length and formal characteristics, Wessely's dialogical passages are in concert with the poems he published in *Hame'asef* and with his biblical epic *Shirei Tiferet (Songs of Glory)*, thus functioning as something other than strict declamation. All in all, Feder's *siḥah* lacks the vital ideological tension present in Wolfsohn's dialogue—more specifically, in the confrontation between Rabbi Ploni, the traditionalist, and Moses Mendelssohn, the *maskil*. It is an echo of an inner rift within the circle of *maskilim*—albeit a significant echo, in that, as something like a judgment-day drama, it represents the emergence of a new form of the dialogue of the dead within Hebrew literature.

#### FEDER'S SETTING: JUDGMENT DAY AT THE HEAVENLY COURT

Since Feder's *Kol Mehazezim* does not constitute a dispute between two ideological rivals in the world-to-come, it may be classified as a judgment day scene. It is a subdivision in the genre of the dialogues of the dead. Feder contributed a new form to the genre of the dialogue of the dead in Hebrew literature in counterdistinction to Wolfsohn and Löwisohn.

<sup>38</sup>p. 23; p. 20.

<sup>39</sup>pp. 24, 26; pp. 21, 23.

<sup>40</sup>p. 25; pp. 21–22.

<sup>41</sup>p. 25; p. 22.

The portrayal of Mendelssohn in *Kol Mehazezim* is important because it addresses his image as conceptualised and portrayed by the *maskilim*. In Wolfssohn's *siḥah*, Mendelssohn is introduced on the day of his arrival in Eden; he is portrayed as having doubts and apprehensions concerning the reception he may receive, in light of the traditionalists' attacks on him during his life. In fact, he is welcomed warmly into Eden. In contrast, Feder describes Mendelssohn as a well-established resident there, and his position and stature have changed dramatically. At the end of Wolfssohn's *siḥah*, God himself embraces Mendelssohn, acknowledging his cultural contributions and welcoming him as one of the chosen élite. In Feder's *siḥah*, he is portrayed as the supreme judge of the court, surrounded by his fellow *maskilim*—Wessely, Euchel, Brill and Ben Ze'ev—who act in accordance with his commands, and as the only figure seated on a chair; ben Israel and Luzzatto standing to his left and right respectively.<sup>42</sup> Thus for Feder Mendelssohn's centrality in the Jewish world is an established fact.

Even though there is an interesting development in Feder's portrayal of Mendelssohn in comparison to the other dialogue, there is no major change from his portrayal by the early *maskilim* in his lifetime, and after his death.<sup>43</sup> Since this is a dialogue that belongs to a sub-group of the dialogue of the dead, namely, to the judgment day scene, Mendelssohn's figure is conceived and portrayed here as a supreme judge, who has the final word in all matters including the evaluation of Lefin's translation. Mendelssohn is further depicted as deciding the fate of the author of *Melamed Si'ah*, who is being returned to his original place in the lower world. He is also portrayed as having the authority to condemn one to the damnation of hell.<sup>44</sup>

In Wolfssohn's *siḥah*, God plays an important role, furnishing Mendelssohn with his stamp of approval. In Feder's *siḥah*, God's role is more limited—He merely welcomes Wessely into heaven. Only His voice is heard, interestingly in rhymed Hebrew, not unlike the Hebrew of a *maskil* such as Wessely.<sup>45</sup> Mendelssohn opens Feder's dialogue with a monologue about the *be'ur* project that he has started, expressing his satisfaction at having trained a generation of translators who will follow in his footsteps.<sup>46</sup> In this manner Feder establishes a backdrop for the condemnation of Lefin, who was once among Mendelssohn's followers but has now gone astray and rejected Mendelssohn's legacy—the accusation levelled by Feder in his introduction.<sup>47</sup>

\* \* \*

The author capitalises on the genre's unique trait of assembling personalities from different historical periods and letting them express their views on controversial issues. Letting historical figures comment on contemporary topics makes the

<sup>42</sup>p. 15; p. 12.

<sup>43</sup>See Pelli, *Moshe Mendelssohn*, pp. 88–114.

<sup>44</sup>p. 20; p. 16.

<sup>45</sup>In Friedlander's published text of the manuscript (see text near note 21), God is not included, the voice of the seraphim being heard instead.

<sup>46</sup>p. 16; p. 12.

<sup>47</sup>p. 13; p. 9.

dialogue interesting and intriguing. Their authority, each one in his respective field, is mobilised to pass judgment in areas which are not necessarily in their field of expertise. In this dialogue, Feder has Menashe ben Israel and Moshe Ḥayim Luzzatto recalled from oblivion, placing them, as customary in the genre, in the company of the *maskilim*.

One may suppose that Feder's choice of two scholars of Sephardic ancestry from an earlier period, neither very likely to have spoken Yiddish, yet asked to express their views on issues of language and translation involving Yiddish, was not made on the basis of their spiritual authority or linguistic talents, but rather tongue in cheek. The other positively viewed figures are taken from the ranks of the Hebrew *maskilim* and grammarians, especially those who translated or wrote commentaries on the Bible as part of the Mendelssohnian school of *be'ur*. In order of their appearance in Feder's text (and of their listing at the head of the dialogue), these figures are Wessely, Euchel, Brill, and Ben Ze'ev.

Dialogues of the dead usually take place upon the death of an important personality and his entry into the world-to-come. It is worth noting that despite the tendency of Hebrew dialogues of the dead to mark a distinguished figure's transition from death to the afterlife, the order of their appearance is here that of their earthly dates of birth<sup>48</sup>—with the exception of Mendelssohn, who is treated differently as the text's central personality. In this manner, the hierarchy of earthly age continues to count within the afterlife reality.

Such transfer of earthly temporality to the hereafter is characteristic of the genre. Wessely's poetic locution immediately suggests that he has just arrived in the latter locus,<sup>49</sup> where he is indeed welcomed by God, as He welcomed Mendelssohn in Wolfsohn's dialogue, and Wessely now meets Mendelssohn and the other *maskilim* in the afterlife. The author passes over an unmistakable anachronism: while the action does in fact take place following the earthly departure of Wessely in 1805, it predates the death of Ben Ze'ev in 1811. (Although, by the time Feder wrote the dialogue in 1813, Ben Ze'ev was in fact dead). Anachronism, Feder appears to be suggesting, does not play a role in the perception of time in the world-to-come.

Elyakim Melamed, author of *Melamed Si'ah*, and the unnamed author of *Aluf Omer* (Master of Speech)—the eighteenth-century, traditionalist, non-Haskalah figures in Feder's dialogue—are placed permanently in Sheol (with the exception of Elyakim Melamed's heavenly court appearance), as befitting the Haskalah concept of who deserves to be accepted in the spiritual world-to-come. These figures are doomed specifically because of the old-fashioned, non-enlightened nature of their biblical translations and commentaries—texts Feder aligns with Lefin's own outmoded translation. As far as the dialogue's remaining figures are concerned, they are the functionaries in the upper world, and then there is Duma in the lower world.

<sup>48</sup>Ben Israel (1604–1657), Luzzatto (1707–1747), Wessely: 1725–1805; Euchel: 1758–1803; Brill: 1760–1802; Ben Ze'ev: 1764–1811.

<sup>49</sup>p. 16; p. 12.

THE STATURE OF THE CHARACTERS IN  
KOL MEHAZEZIM AND THEIR PORTRAYAL

As would be expected, the stature of the characters in Feder's text in the afterlife is similar to that which they held in this world. Wessely, for instance, remains the poet *par excellence*, typified by both his verse and florid speech. He is described as singing before the Almighty—in Jewish sources a characterisation of the righteous in Eden.<sup>50</sup> Similarly, Euchel's eloquence, too, is sometimes conveyed through his speaking in rhymed verse. Feder expresses consistent respect for the *maskilim* by referring to them with honorific acronyms: interestingly, the titles found in the manuscript published by Friedlander are different from those found in the Lemberg edition of 1853. In the latter edition, Wessely is *MHRNHW* (*Morenu Harav Reb Naphtali Herz Weisel*), the full honorific *Morenu Harav* ("our teacher, the Rabbi") being used only in his case; Mendelssohn is *RMD* (Rabbi Moshe Dessau), as he was referred to in Hebrew by the *maskilim*; Euchel is *RAA* (R. Aleph Aleph, the acronym of Isaac Euchel's name in Hebrew characters), or else simply *R. Itzik Euchel*; Brill is either *R. Joel Brill* or *Rj Brill*; and Menashe ben Israel and Moshe Hayim Luzzatto receive either the honorific *R.* or the abbreviations *MBI* and *RMHL*, respectively. Only Ben Ze'ev is not referred to by any honorific title, but simply by his name—perhaps a token of him not being considered one of the founding fathers of the Haskalah.<sup>51</sup>

Wessely is also characterised by Feder through the contents of his prosaic statements. At one point, for example, he praises himself for walking in Luzzatto's footsteps and like him helping to revive the Hebrew language—this self-praise sounding very much like Feder's own words resounding in Wessely's mouth.<sup>52</sup> It would thus appear that in the world to come truth matters more than the party conveying it. Feder likewise reveals Wessely's high degree of optimism regarding the future of the Haskalah through that *maskil's* observation that many young people are now following the early *maskilim*. This optimism also seems manifest in Wessely's initial response to Euchel's complaint about Lefin's translation of Proverbs—an expression of faith in Lefin's spiritual and maskilic leadership. But once he hears Brill's and then Ben Ze'ev's testimony regarding the translation, he reverses his position: a reversal perhaps expressing Feder's sense that individual viewpoints are not static or frozen in time, that they can at least change in the world beyond. In any event, the main function of Wessely's initial position in Feder's dialogue is tactical (and certainly no effort to convey factual reality), enabling the other *maskilim* to establish that Lefin's translation is indeed defective.

It is notable that in line with the basic Haskalah ethos, not only Wessely but in fact all of Feder's positive characters, the *maskilim*, are capable of undergoing spiritual change, of developing their personality and making intellectual progress. Predictably, the negative characters, the traditionalists, display no capacity for any change, hence

<sup>50</sup>p. 16; p. 12. See 'Seder Gan Eden', in Aharon Jelinek (ed.) *Beit Hamidrash (House of Learning)*, vol. 3, third edn., Jerusalem 1967, p. 133: "All *tzadikim* [righteous people] sing in the rising morning."

<sup>51</sup>In Friedlander's manuscript, Mendelssohn is referred to as *RMBMN* (Rabeinu Moshe ben Menahem), another honorific term used by the *maskilim* for Mendelssohn.

<sup>52</sup>p. 18; p. 14.

being cut off in Sheol from wisdom and learning. Euchel, like Wessely, thus undergoes some change: he is temporarily punished for the anger sparked in him by Lefin's work, as in the world-to-come there is no place for such an unbecoming earthly trait. However, once Wessely and Mendelssohn realise that Euchel has indeed been correct in rejecting a corrupt translation, he is restored to his proper place in Eden.

In contrast, as the embodiment of a "negative" character, Elyakim Melamed remains intellectually static, despite his aspiration to "become free at last",<sup>53</sup> that is to be raised from the lower to the upper world through his judges' recognition of his own role in the biblical translation, and despite his own temporary move on high when summoned to the heavenly court of the *maskilim*. For in Feder's work, in distinction to Wolfssohn's, there is not even an effort to persuade the "negative" character to change his mind.

As a compliment to the various more or less indirect ways of characterising the *maskilim* in their pursuit of wisdom (*hochmah*) and knowledge, Feder makes use of a satirical device that one also finds in Wolfssohn: a presentation of the *maskilim* through the eyes of their adversaries, the rabbis and traditionalist authors. Elyakim Melamed, for instance, describes the *maskilim* as "clean-shaven, baring their backsides".<sup>54</sup> The absence of a beard is simply a stereotypical attribute of a modern *maskil*. On the other hand, the image of "bare backsides" (in other words, uncovered buttocks), based on Isaiah 20:4, may be of more than passing interest, as something other than a sardonic reference to the short, modern coats worn by *maskilim*.<sup>55</sup> It is possible that, aside from being a derogatory phrase, it may indicate some influence of the antique and European dialogues of the dead, with their characters occupying Elysium in appropriately scant antique clothing.<sup>56</sup>

Finally, we need to note that in Feder's dialogue as in Wolfssohn's before him, psychological reactions and inner feelings are depicted through vividly described facial expression in the bracketed description. Euchel, upset as he enters the scene, reveals this mood in an angry face.<sup>57</sup> Ben Ze'ev's face "turns green" as he trembles, and his face is "blackened".<sup>58</sup> Such descriptions of facial expressions are in line with the general use of an "earthly" language abounding with figurative speech.

#### FEDER'S DESCRIPTION OF THE HEAVENLY ABODE

Descriptions of the heavenly landscape in various dialogues of the dead are, as perceived by the writer, of great interest as they reveal the writer's mindset and his

<sup>53</sup>p. 26; p. 22.

<sup>54</sup>pp. 24–25; pp. 22–23.

<sup>55</sup>Ha'efrati's *Alon Bachut* features a title page with an illustration of Rabbi Yehezkel Landau embracing and kissing Mendelssohn in Eden. The two figures' paradisaical clothes are identical with their presumed earthly ones, Landau wearing a rabbinical robe and Mendelssohn a modern European suit. (See copy of this illustration on the front plate of Pelli, *Age of Haskalah*.)

<sup>56</sup>In Lucian's dialogues of the dead, the shades remove their clothes and other earthly status symbols; see *Lucian's Dialogues*, transl. by Howard Williams, London 1900, p. 105.

<sup>57</sup>p. 18; p. 14.

<sup>58</sup>p. 23; p. 19.

special treatment of the genre. In his own dialogue, Wolfsohn bases his depiction of the heavenly locus on Jewish tradition, more specifically on biblical descriptions of Eden and especially on the Midrash. Allusions to the depiction in Genesis are abundant, trees thus being described as “pleasing to the sight and good for food” (Genesis 2:9), with many souls sitting in joy and friendship in their shade.<sup>59</sup> By contrast, Feder’s dialogue is rather pale in its depiction of the same setting, lacking any description of the heavenly scenery in the “stage instructions” provided in parentheses. All told, there is hardly an effort in Feder’s *siḥah* to portray the reality of the heavenly locale, whether in metaphysical, spiritual or physical terms. It is possible that Feder assumed that any such description would no longer be necessary, being so well known now to readers of Hebrew dialogues of the dead. Readers are thus required to fill in the missing details, whether from their own imaginations or based on the literary conventions of the genre.

Similarly, in contrast to Wolfsohn’s approach in his *siḥah*, there is very little reference by the characters themselves to their heavenly environment, which, following Jewish tradition, is signified simply as *Gan Eden* in an identification of that locus with the world to come,<sup>60</sup> but without any vivid or definitive description. But there are several exceptions. Wessely, for example, refers to the locale as the “dwelling place of *Moshe*, your servant”,<sup>61</sup> thus playing on the identification—established already in the introduction—of Moses Mendelssohn with his illustrious namesake, both figures being presented as equals in stature in the world-to-come. In doing so he capitalises on the ambivalent identity of Moshe as either Moshe the lawgiver or Moses Mendelssohn. The reader is now engaged in an identity riddle: is it Mendelssohn or Moses? The result is that these great personalities are presented as equals in stature in the world-to-come. This ambivalence is already referred to in the introduction as the author mentions the great opposition to Mendelssohn’s *Be’ur*, using the expression “but Moshe, His servant, was successful”, a term that is customarily applied to Moses the lawgiver, but now is reassigned to Moses Mendelssohn.<sup>62</sup> The solution to the identity riddle does identify “Moses, His servant” as Moses Mendelssohn. This repeated phrase places Mendelssohn at the center of reality in the maskilic Eden, as perceived by Feder, paralleling the stature of Moses, the lawgiver and the “Master of all prophets”. This juxtaposition became a permanent feature in the perception and the portrayal of Mendelssohn in the early part of Haskalah during Mendelssohn’s lifetime and immediately after his death.<sup>63</sup>

The transition from earthly life to the heavenly one, discussed in the critical literature on the dialogues of the dead, is depicted by Feder through Wessely using clichés such as “from darkness to light” and “release from prison to freedom”.<sup>64</sup> These expressions are very general and do not contribute significant insight into the

<sup>59</sup>Wolfsohn, ‘Siḥah Be’eretẓ Haḥayim’, p. 54.

<sup>60</sup>p. 17; p. 13.

<sup>61</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>62</sup>p. 14; p. 10.

<sup>63</sup>See discussion about the identification of Moses Mendelssohn and Moses in Pelli, *Moshe Mendelssohn*, pp. 91–94.

<sup>64</sup>p. 16; p.12

author's concept of the afterlife beyond the known conventional notions of "darkness-light" (the latter representing the light of wisdom and Haskalah) and "prison-freedom".

It is clear that Feder did not make use of descriptive options inherent in the genre that might have furthered his satiric purposes. Nor did he endow his dialogue with either realistic or super-realistic detail. Nevertheless, there is an apparent focus in the dialogue on one physical object in the Garden of Eden, a "gate"—although this is itself referred to rather than described. As the shades arrive at the gate, a "voice from up high" is heard saying, "This gate is closed and will not be open; an enraged heart may not enter here, only a happy one will". And, indeed, as the shades approach the gate the angels ascertain whether the new soul, that of Joel Brill, is happy and content; at first he is refused entry but eventually he is allowed through the gate into Eden.<sup>65</sup> The gate again appears as a metaphor in Wessely's poetic utterances: "Eden, open up your doors"<sup>66</sup> and "lift up your heads, O gates, lift them up, you everlasting doors",<sup>67</sup> which is based on Psalms 24: 7, 9. The source of the gate's importance is rather apparent: it marks a distinct separation between the sections in the world to come, at the same time ideologically demarcating the separation between the *maskilim* and their opponents.<sup>68</sup>

Of the heavenly bodies, only the setting sun is mentioned in Feder's dialogue,<sup>69</sup> a continuation in heaven of the earthly temporal cycle (a prominent theme in Feder's satire), and an expression of the need to complete all business in Eden, especially the trial, before sunset. This theme may be related to that of *Yom Hadin*, the day of judgment. It should be noted that the metaphor of closing the "evening gates" already appears in Löwisohn's *Sihah Be'olam Haneshamot*, where it signifies the dialogue's end.<sup>70</sup>

Even Feder's depiction of the heavenly world's nonmaterial, *spiritual* aspects is rather one-dimensional, happiness being the dominant feature of the reality of Eden. As Wessely indicates, in Eden "there is no anger, no jealousy and no sadness",<sup>71</sup> features common throughout the European dialogue of the dead.<sup>72</sup> One must be happy and content to be allowed into Eden, as has been seen in the cases of Joel Brill and Isaac Euchel: at first "sullen and displeased", he follows Wessely's advice to change his attitude and is then allowed in. Euchel, unhappy about Lefin's translation, is likewise temporarily excluded from Eden's bliss.

As mentioned earlier, when the *maskil* Joel Brill is about to enter the gate, the cherubim are checking to see whether he is happy in order to ascertain that he deserves to enter Eden.<sup>73</sup> Brill, who at first was "sullen and displeased", he follows Wessely's advice to change his attitude and is then allowed in. and indeed once he does, the

<sup>65</sup>p. 21; p. 18.

<sup>66</sup>p. 21; p. 17.

<sup>67</sup>p. 21; p. 18.

<sup>68</sup>Gates are naturally abundantly present in the Jewish sources; see, for example, 'Seder Gan Eden', p. 134.

<sup>69</sup>p. 25; p. 22.

<sup>70</sup>Löwisohn, *Sihah Be'olam Haneshamot*, p. 38a.

<sup>71</sup>p. 18; p. 14; cf. p. 19; p. 15.

<sup>72</sup>Wieland's Elysium, for instance ('Gespräche im Elysium', pp. 394–395), is likewise depicted as a place lacking jealousy or a desire for vengeance.

<sup>73</sup>p. 21; p. 18.



cherubim allow him to enter the gate to Eden. Euchel, on the other hand, who is portrayed as being very depressed while expressing critical remarks about Lefin's translation, is temporarily excluded from Eden's bliss and is held back. He is not permitted to enter Eden, where "there is no anger, no jealousy and no sadness" (p. 18; p. 14), according to Wessely's specification. Thus Wessely establishes the characteristics of the afterlife as peaceful, full of friendship, lacking jealousy, anger, and sadness.<sup>74</sup>

While this thematic emphasis may reflect Feder's debt to the non-Hebraic European genre, he may have also drawn his sources from Hebraic works such as Immanuel Haromi's *Maḥberot Immanuel*, where Eden is graced with "everlasting happiness and ceaseless rejoicing"<sup>75</sup>—states of mind that, however, Haromi does not further delineate. Another aspect of the afterlife, which is discussed in the critical literature of the genre, is the question of memory. Importantly, in this Hebrew piece, memory continues in the other world, and the shades do not forget their past earthly experience.<sup>76</sup>

While both Wolfssohn and Feder portray Eden as a locus of total peace and harmony, Feder, unlike Wolfssohn, does not connect this harmonious locus to an idea of ultimate truth. This difference emerges from the very nature of the disputes in the two dialogues. In Wolfssohn's *Siḥah Be'ereṭz Haḥayim*, the dispute between the *maskilim* and Reb Ploni, a traditionalist rabbi, who has been cited above, is in fact aimed at arriving at a sense of the maskilic truth; Wolfssohn thus emphasises truth as the afterlife's dominant feature. By contrast, in Feder's *Kol Meḥazezim* the dispute is among the *maskilim* themselves, the maskilic truth thus being known and widely recognized. Although at one point Euchel, complaining that he has been sent to the outskirts of Eden, exclaims "Arise, Truth, for you I have fought"<sup>77</sup>, for Feder the dominant trope is peace, the struggle to achieve tranquillity among the *maskilim*.

Nevertheless, as each of the *maskilim* appears on the heavenly scene, he is characterised as upset, angry or depressed. Against the backdrop of the required heavenly harmony, their anger is initially perplexing, its explanation not revealed at once, since the dialogue follows a principle of gradual disclosure: at first, there is the position espoused by Wessely, who is unwilling to believe the other *maskilim*'s complaints about Lefin's translation. Inevitably, this disbelief raises doubts in the reader as well regarding these complaints. But confronted by the weight of the testimony directed against Lefin, Wessely eventually changes his mind. The tradition-bound Elyakim Melamed continues to vouch for the excellence of Lefin's translation—but at this point his words have the opposite of the intended effect.

## THE WORLD AS IT IS AND THE WORLD-TO-COME

As befits the European dialogue of the dead in general, Feder's *Kol Meḥazezim* does not take place in a realm detached from earthly events. The author does not desire

<sup>74</sup>p. 19; p. 15

<sup>75</sup>Immanuel Haromi, *Maḥberot Immanuel (Immanuel's Books)*, vol. 2, Jerusalem 1957, ed. by Dov Yardeni, p. 539.

<sup>76</sup>p. 22; p. 18.

<sup>77</sup>p. 20; p. 17.

to depict the world-to-come as existing in some sort of ivory tower. On the contrary, the other-worldly reality is closely related to the this-worldly reality. Indeed, like his maskilic colleagues, Mendelssohn, for example, is portrayed in the opening of the dialogue's first scene as having "his heart in the studies of *hochmah*".<sup>78</sup> Feder does not really explain what the study of *hochmah* is or how Mendelssohn's labours are related to those of the other *maskilim*. But in their preoccupation with *hochmah*, the *maskilim* in Eden are, of course, maintaining the same Haskalah ideal they preached on earth, an ideal thus defined as worthy of Eden as well. In general these *maskilim* are very much interested in occurrences back on earth. Feder dwells on both the information they receive in that regard and their reaction to it. Thus Feder presents his *maskilim* as interested in the progress of the Enlightenment on earth and in the continuity there of their Haskalic projects—a clear reflection of the author's own earthbound focus, the celestial Haskalah of the *maskilim* itself representing the utopian aspirations of an earthly ideal.

While earthly objects are generally wanting in the heavenly venue, one such object that does appear there is Lefin's controversial book itself. Already in Wolfsohn's *siḥah*, as well as in the anti-Chassidic satires that are to appear later in Haskalah literature, books, as objects, play an important role.<sup>79</sup> Feder depicts Ben Ze'ev as approaching, "an open book [i.e. Lefin's book] in his hand".<sup>80</sup> In doing so he wishes to reinforce the justification of his critique through a resort to proven Talmudic method, as encapsulated in the injunction "let us get the book and examine it" (*neitei sefer venehezei*). The verdict of corrupt translation will thus not emerge from mere hearsay, even hearsay on the part of *maskilim* not meant to be suspected of bias, but from the very text at issue. Ben Ze'ev, the biblical scholar, is now asked by Mendelssohn, the initiator and editor of the *be'ur*, to read several passages from the book he is holding, both Wessely—until now unwilling to heed the complaints of his colleagues—and Mendelssohn—sitting in judgment, hence bound to objectivity—now being compelled to adapt a critical stance in its regard. Quoting from texts is a common feature in European dialogues of the dead;<sup>81</sup> Wolfsohn used the device (citing from Mendelssohn's *Phaedon*) before Feder.

Another object in Feder's dialogue is brought to Eden in mysterious ways. It is the text of a poem, composed by Elyakim Melamed in the other world in praise of Lefin's translation. Lefin is referred to as "Menaḥem Mendel of Satanow", citing the Yiddish version of his name for satirical purpose. And the poem, which is handed to Duma to be forwarded to Lefin, parodies a mixture of Hebrew and Aramaic, in an archaic, rabbinic fashion. This communication between the upper and lower worlds, or between the world-to-come and this world, lacks detail, and it is difficult to decide whether Feder is treating it as one of the features of the genre. If it were a message

<sup>78</sup>p. 15; p. 11.

<sup>79</sup>See Pelli, *Sugot*, pp. 169, 195 (on the satire of Saul Berlin and Isaac Erter). See also Shmuel Werses, *Sipur Veshorsho (The Story and Its Root)*, Ramat Gan 1971, p. 42, and Baruch Kurzweil, *Bama'avak Al Erchei Hayahadut (Struggling over Judaic Values)*, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv 1970, pp. 55–95 (on Joseph Perl's satire). See also Ben Ami Feingold, 'Hasefer Vahasifrut Kenose Basiporet Hamaskilit' ('The Book and Literature as Subjects in Haskalah Fiction'), in *Mehkarim Besifrut Ivrit, Te'udah*, vol. 5, Tel Aviv 1986, pp. 85–100.

<sup>80</sup>p. 22; p. 19.

<sup>81</sup>See Rutledge, p. 90.

from the *maskilim*, the author would have emphasised it as the word of the departed Haskalah fathers to their followers on earth. There is, however, no indication this is the case, and it seems depositing the poem with Sheol's custodian is simply meant to hint at Lefin's destiny upon departing from earth to hell, where the message will await him.

As mentioned before, the author enlists two Jewish scholars of world renown, Menashe ben Israel and Moshe Ḥayim Luzzatto, who were not necessarily known for their expertise in Yiddish, to testify and identify the language of Lefin's translation. Mendelssohn himself has difficulties identifying that language ("I don't know, perhaps it is a language unknown to me"<sup>82</sup>). Then the two pundits have doubts about its identity, saying: "[The] Italian [language] says, it is not mine, and the Arab [language] says, it is not with me, perhaps it is the language of the scapegoats and Azazels, the neighing of a horse or a whooping of a crane."<sup>83</sup> Ostensibly, Yiddish is not perceived to be one of the accepted languages of cultured people.

But Feder is not content with such scholarly testimony and enlists an ideological rival to express his traditional views, which will serve the purpose of the author. Thus the traditionalist author of *Melamed Si'ah*, who also translated passages from the Torah into Yiddish in his book, is summoned to provide his "professional" view of Lefin's translation. In order to prepare the reader for the "expert" testimony of Elyakim Melamed, Feder places him on the lower level of the world to come, as appropriate to someone who himself has used Yiddish in his biblical translations. An additional device Feder employs, the characterisation of spiritual through physical attributes, while common in Haskalah literature, is uncommon in modern European dialogues of the dead, whose figures, inhabiting Eden or Elysium, tend to be incorporeal, to lack distinct physical characterisation. Here the single physical portrayal is of the traditionalist author, and the description is something less than complimentary: "He is a very terrible old man, a span in height, his saliva on his beard, and his beard down to his navel, he is a hunchback having crushed testes, crawling on his belly, his hairlocks are black, wherein numerous small and big insects abide."<sup>84</sup>

#### FEDER'S CHARACTERISATION OF "PLUTO BEN ḤLAVNA"

In the above-cited passage, Feder presents Elyakim Melamed—referring to him as "Pluto ben Ḥlavna"—through a series of biblical allusions which serve as metaphors for his spiritual traits. His description of Pluto as a dwarf ("a span in height") is in

<sup>82</sup>p. 24; pp. 20–21.

<sup>83</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>84</sup>p. 25; p. 22. A more positive exception is found in Wolfssohn's *siḥah*, p. 151, in the figure of Socrates, embodying wisdom as a high value in Eden. See Pelli, *Sugot*, chap. 2a, on Wolfssohn, p. 62. It should be pointed out that placing non-Jewish righteous people in Eden and exhibiting a positive attitude toward them is not unique to Haskalah. In *Seder Gan Eden*, the Righteous Among the Nations are depicted as situated between the garden's second and third walls, but not within Eden's confines themselves; they are moved to the abyss towards evening [Jellinek [ed.], vol. 3, p. 131]. On the other hand, it cannot be said that there is a dominant influence of Haromi on Feder. For the latter could have used Haromi's method by bringing in King Solomon, who, according to tradition, composed the Book of Proverbs, to testify on the translation, as did Immanuel in his *Mahbarot*, p. 548.

direct contrast to the giant Goliath, whose height was “six cubits and a span tall” (I Samuel 17:4). He implies that Pluto is mad (“his saliva on his beard”), which is based on the depiction of David (when “sore afraid of Achish the king of Gath”) as letting “his saliva run down his beard” (I Samuel 21:14). He further suggests that, because of his deformity, he is permanently excluded from the priesthood (as a “hunchback having crushed testes”), which alludes to the relevant injunction in Leviticus (21:20) regarding anyone who is “crook-backed, or a dwarf ... or hath his stones crushed”. He also portrays Pluto as an impure insect (“crawling on his belly”), which is based on the injunction in Leviticus (11:42) that “whatsoever goeth upon the belly” or “upon all fours, or whatsoever hath many feet ... them ye shall not eat; for they are a detestable thing”. (Curiously, the expression “black hairlocks”, a reference to Song of Songs 5:11, is given a drastically different valence here). The lower level of the other world is depicted as inhabited by lowly individuals who were placed there as part of their punishment. They are associated with lower creatures, their spiritual status being depicted by the insects that nest on their bodies.<sup>85</sup>

Depicting reality in Hell in a corporeal manner in this work is no different from its depiction in the traditional Jewish and in general literature. The portrayal of punishment in Hell in the Midrash and by Immanuel Haromi and Moshe Zaccut are based on corporeal punishment that requires a body.<sup>86</sup> Obviously, Feder did not undertake to describe the punishment of this resident in Hell as the dwellers of the abyss were previously portrayed in Jewish literature.

Predictably enough, Feder’s dialogue reaches its climax in a confrontation between representatives of the two opposing viewpoints, traditional and maskilic, regarding the appropriateness of translation into Yiddish. Although Feder invites Elyakim Melamed to leave the abyss and testify in Eden, he also establishes clear physical and spiritual boundaries between these two worlds and between the unenlightened and enlightened perspectives they represent. Upon his arrival in Eden, Elyakim tries to approach the group of *maskilim*, which includes Mendelssohn, but Duma keeps him at a sufficient distance from Mendelssohn,<sup>87</sup> thus establishing the marked gap that separates them.<sup>88</sup> This is a physical as well as a spiritual gap, which the author attempts to highlight. It reflects the wide gulf that separates the enlightened world of Haskalah and a backward element in Judaism—strictly from a maskilic point of view. In the author’s mind, Lefin has manifested his association with this anti-maskilic element by the very translation that he had done. Lefin appears to belong to this group of Haskalah adversaries, as will be shown below.

The author of *Melamed Si’ah* is now asked to first examine, then assess Lefin’s translation. In his description of this assessment, Feder makes use of satiric allusions to the Bible and other sources that could be readily identified by contemporary

<sup>85</sup>p. 26; p. 23.

<sup>86</sup>See Elijah ben Moshe de Vidas, ‘Masechet Gehinom’ (“Tractate Gehenna”), in *Reisheet Hochmah* (*The Beginning of Wisdom*), Amsterdam 1708, facsimile edn., chap. 13. See also Immanuel Haromi, *Mahberet Hatofet Veha’eden* (*The Book of Tofet and Eden*), Berlin 1922, and Moshe Zaccut, *Tofteh Aruch* (*Readied Tofet*), Berlin 1922, and additional references in Pelli, *Sugot*, chap. 2b, pp. 85–86, n. 30.

<sup>87</sup>p. 25; p. 22.

<sup>88</sup>*ibid.*

readers. For example, he describes Elyakim Melamed as having read Lefin's book from beginning to end before sunset and as being joyful, "leaping and whirling"<sup>89</sup>—the phrase *veyefazez veyechrker* being a reference to the episode in II Samuel (6: 16) where Michal, daughter of Saul, sees David "leaping and dancing before the Lord" after smiting the Philistines. In reaction to David's joyful motions, we read in the same verse, Michal "despised him in her heart", and Feder is clearly suggesting a similar response of the *maskilim* to Elyakim. In another passage of the dialogue Elyakim joyfully exclaims that, "Now I know my wisdom is still alive; this is my teaching, this is my rhetoric, this is my riddle, this translator's name will go forth throughout the land."<sup>90</sup> This is a verbal irony as Feder, through his protagonist, refers to the the language of *kaparot*, expiatory prayers, in the Jewish liturgy: *Zeh halifati, zeh temurati, zeh kaparati, zeh hatarnegol yelech lemitah va'ani elech ve'ekanes lehayim tovim arukim uleshalom*—"this is my replacement, this is my substitute, this is my atonement, this rooster will go to death and I will go and enter a good and long life and peace".<sup>91</sup> The textual parallel, not grasped by Elyakim himself, alludes to Lefin's fate, and perhaps ironically to the "good" life Elyakim can expect in the abyss.

A last episode involves Elyakim's effort to follow in the footsteps of the maskilic poets (who are referred to early in the dialogue) by declaiming a poem in honour of Lefin's new translation, Duma then being asked to take the poem to Lefin. Feder characterises this approbation as written in a corrupt language abounding with Aramaisms, in contrast to the elegant poem Wessely recites upon arriving on the scene, itself based on the purity of biblical Hebrew. The content of the author of *Melamed Si'ah*'s poetic approbation is contrary to the maskilic ideal that is now realised in Eden. This author's aspirations are not wisdom and learning as was the goal of Mendelssohn and Wessely; instead, he yearns for the midrashic legendary goose of Bar Ḥanah,<sup>92</sup> and for the preserved wine and the leviathan,<sup>93</sup> promised, according to the Midrash, to the righteous in Eden. The reaction of the *maskilim* to the approbation is derisive laughter, directed at both the poet's work and his appearance.<sup>94</sup> Obviously, the traditionalist author's support of Lefin is intended for its verbal irony, because his positive assessment of Lefin's translation is conceived by the *maskilim* as an incriminating testimony against Lefin. Finally, Mendelssohn orders Duma to take him back to Hell, the place that befits him best.

The peculiar name of the author of *Melamed Si'ah* is no doubt of significant interest. He is referred to as "Pluto ben Ḥlavna" by Duma, in charge of the abyss, according to Feder,<sup>95</sup> and by Mendelssohn as well.<sup>96</sup> Friedlander attempted to interpret the name only to admit that his explanation was just a conjecture, perhaps

<sup>89</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>90</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>91</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>92</sup>Rabah bar bar Ḥanah was known for his exaggerated stories; see Talmud Bavli, Baba Batra 73 on his geese, and 75 on the leviathan.

<sup>93</sup>p. 26; p22.

<sup>94</sup>p. 26; p. 23.

<sup>95</sup>p. 25; p. 21.

<sup>96</sup>p. 26; p. 23.

even somewhat tenuous.<sup>97</sup> The name Pluto in Greek mythology refers to the god who rules Hades, but its appearance in *Kol Mehazezim* may be traced to the dialogues of the dead. In Lucian's dialogues of the dead, as well as in other dialogues, Pluto is one of the main figures who plays an important role.<sup>98</sup> Feder's use of the name is intended for ironical purpose: Pluto is an exalted, lofty name, yet it is attributed here to the resident of the lower abyss. With the perceived association of Pluto with Hell (for Pluto is, in effect, in charge of that region), there emerges an incongruity between that sublime name and the lowly situated person.

The name Hlavna is an uncommon Yiddish name for women and for men. In its application to men, Hlavna serves as a Yiddish nickname for the Hebrew name 'Lapidot'.<sup>99</sup> The allusion Hlavna=Lapidot ridicules this inhabitant of Sheol, whose punishment is burning in fire (*Lapidot, lapid*, implies a torch).<sup>100</sup> There may be a different meaning that ironically alludes to 'Eshet Lapidot' (the wife of Lapidot, based on Judges 4:4), referring to a mighty woman (such as Deborah), whereas the wretched description of the author of *Melamed Si'ah* is a far cry from the folklore notion of the powerful 'Eshet Lapidot'. In addition, Feder creates another incongruity stemming from the equation of the lofty Greek name Pluto and the esoteric and rare Yiddish name Hlavna. The combination of the two names creates a sense of dissonance, a disharmony leading to ridicule.

It should be noted that the function of the author of *Melamed Si'ah* is intended to criticise Lefin for deviating from the enlightened paths of Haskalah and walking in the footsteps of the *maskilim's* adversaries. Lefin is to be condemned because he did not follow Mendelssohn's spiritual will—this is the fundamental premise of the author of this *sihah*. The suggested notion that the author of *Melamed Si'ah* was modeled on the figure of the Polish rabbi, Reb Ploni, Mendelssohn's main adversarial character in Wolfsohn's *Si'ah*, ought to be rejected.<sup>101</sup> For the author of *Melamed Si'ah* is not a viable adversary at all, but is somewhat of a twin image, an alter ego, of Lefin himself, whom Feder could not have transferred prematurely to the other world. His wretched character is but a distorted mirror image of Lefin. The poem that the traditionalist author wrote in honor of Lefin reads like an enthusiastic

<sup>97</sup>Friedlander, in his article in *Zehut*, I, p. 302, and in his book *Bemistere Hasatirah*, p. 70, refers to it as quite an unclear name. In the edition of the manuscript he published, the name is read as "Pilta", and consequently Friedlander interprets the name as based on Shir Hashirim Rabah, meaning oil. Another suggestion by Friedlander that relates Pluto to the planet does not explain its use here. At any rate, if indeed the name is Pilta, it is a nickname of Elimelech (see *Sefer Tiv Gitin [Book of Divorce]* by Menaḥem Mannes, Vilna 1849, p. 6a). However, the right name is Pluto, which in the context of the dialogues of the dead is a common figure.

<sup>98</sup>See *Lucian's Dialogues*, dialogues v and vi, pp. 95–99, and Sir Fleetwood Sheppard's dialogues in Keener, pp. 180–184.

<sup>99</sup>As to the identity of the name Hlavna, see *Sefer Tiv Gitin*, p. 23a. Also, Shlomo Gansfried, *Ohalei Shem ('Tents of Shem)*, Lemberg 1907, p. 86a. That this name was known—though rare—at that time is apparent from Aaron Wolfsohn's article on foreign names among Jews in *Hame'asef*, vol. VI (1790), p. 252.

<sup>100</sup>*Sefer Tiv Gitin*, p. 23a, explains that the firewood called Hlavna is erroneously named Hlavna, as the author cites several sources where the name is related to 'Lapidot'.

<sup>101</sup>Friedlander found alleged traces of Wolfsohn's influence on Feder in the depiction of the traditional author, but did show also the difference between them. Yet, he insisted that there is no doubt that Reb Ploni served as model to Feder's character. See, 'Riv Haleshonot Bemizrah Eiropah Beresheetah Shel Hame'ah Hatesha Esreh', in *Min Hakatedra*, pp. 30–31 and his book *Bamistere Hasatirah*, pp. 31–32.

approbation of the translation and as a declaration of a total identification with and sympathy for him. The use of the language structure of the *kaparot* style, as cited above, “this is my teaching, this is my rhetoric”,<sup>102</sup> purports to point out the affinity in mentality and creative endeavor of the traditionalist speaker with his protégé. And the echo of the alluded style of *kaparot* indeed supports the notion that the author of *Melamed Si’ah* is but a double (“this is my replacement, this is my substitute”) of Lefin.

## DUMA AND HIS ENVIRONMENT

Feder’s *sihah* manifests some development in the Hebrew genre of the dialogues of the dead. Although Feder does not offer a topography of the Garden of Eden itself, his dialogue nevertheless presents a picture of the relation between Sheol and Eden different from what one finds in Wolfssohn, for whom the lower world only exists through implication (Mendelssohn expresses his fear of not being accepted into the upper chamber).<sup>103</sup> Hence Wolfssohn does not transfer Reb Ploni to the lower world, rather leaving him by himself once Moses and God proceed on their way. In contrast, Feder’s portrayal of the reality of after-life does acknowledge the existence of the lower level and also tells a little about its residents. As part of this concept, a figure associated with the lower level of afterlife appears in Feder’s *sihah* and is in addition to the cherubim, the angels of the upper level, who play a role in both Wolfssohn’s *sihah* and at the beginning of Feder’s. As mentioned before, he is Duma, in charge of the nether world (Hebrew: ‘*hatzar mavet*’), who is well versed with all the inhabitants of the world.<sup>104</sup>

As a counterpart to the upper world’s angels (appearing in both of Wolfssohn’s dialogues as well), Sheol’s most prominent resident in Feder’s dialogue is Duma, the region’s custodian. In his choice of a name for the functionary in charge of Sheol, Feder once again draws on Judaic sources such as the Zohar, where Duma is in charge of Gehenna (“Tofta”, the burning fire in “the valley of the son of Hinom”, to the south of Jerusalem, mentioned in both 1 Kings [11:7] and 2 Kings [23:10], where children were sacrificed in ritual fire<sup>105</sup> (now reinterpreted as the equivalent of hell); the souls of the wicked being handed to him to be placed there and be judged by him. In some sources, Duma is described as possessing all information on all the dead, his main duty being to report to the Almighty about them. He is also described as being responsible for announcing, on behalf of the Almighty, the future resurrection of a given body at its appointed time, as well as the identity of the righteous ones who will be resurrected in the world-to-come.<sup>106</sup> The name of Duma’s dwelling place ‘*hatzar*

<sup>102</sup>p. 25; p. 22.

<sup>103</sup>Wolfssohn, ‘*Siḥah*’, pp. 203–205.

<sup>104</sup>p. 24; p. 21.

<sup>105</sup>See *Beit Hamidrash*, vol. 1, p. 147; *ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 49; *Reisheet Hochmah*, p. 42a, 47b, 42b.

<sup>106</sup>Duma and his role are described in early talmudic sources such as Shabat 152b and Sanhedrin 94a, in midrashim such as Tanḥuma and Shoher Tov, and in late sources such as the Zohar. These midrashim were collected, in part, in *Reisheet Hochmah*, and in Jellinek (ed.) as well as in Judah David Eisenstein, *Otzar Midrashim (A Treasure of Midrashim)*, New York 1915. The sources dealing with Duma are found in Reuven Margaliyot, *Malachei Elyon (The Angels of the Almighty)*, Jerusalem 1964, pp. 225–229. Friedlander argues that Duma is named after the name of his section in Hell. See *idem*, *Bamisterei Hasatirah*, p. 69.

mavet,' the nether world, appears in Jewish sources; it is the place where all dead spirits abide.<sup>107</sup>

Duma, following Mendelssohn's command and in his capacity as the angel knowing the location of every human being, summons Elyakim Melamed "to the place which I shall show you". Elyakim reacts with joyful anticipation ("He hurried up, his heart telling him that his time to join the residents of Eden was coming close"<sup>108</sup>)—a reaction that can be understood in light of Duma's role in Jewish sources as heralding redemption from Sheol. The terms used in this episode to describe the netherworld—*Alukah*, *Tahtit*, *Tofta* and *Gay ben Hinom*, and of course *Sheol*<sup>109</sup>—themselves naturally stem from various Jewish sources.<sup>110</sup>

Werses, who checked the sources of influence on Feder's descriptions, is of the opinion that he is indebted to the German dialogues and not the Jewish sources. Werses assumes that Wieland's translation of Lucian's works (1788–1789) most probably was known to Feder. While he admits to some influence from the Jewish sources, Werses argues that the greatest influence came from external sources. Friedlander cites Werses, but does not reach any conclusion as to the sources of influence on Feder.<sup>111</sup>

Our discussion so far leads us to conclude that in selecting the names of sections of the netherland and the name of the person in charge of Gehenna and his responsibilities, Feder used the Jewish literary tradition. Yet, the genre of the dialogues of the dead is always in his mind as a model. The final product of his *siḥah* is determined by the ideological need and the effectiveness of the satiric device on the reader. The name Pluto ben Hlavna, borrowed from both internal and external sources, best shows Feder's way of writing.

\* \* \*

It is thus apparent that in his dialogue Feder is in strong debt to the Jewish literary tradition, on the one hand, the European dialogues of the dead, on the other. One theme above all is at work in the dialogue, connecting its parts, accounting for its wider implications, and exemplifying its spirit. This is the involvement and the interest of the founding fathers of the Haskalah in seeing—through both biblical translation and exegetical labour—to the movement's ideological continuity, and to the continuity of the Mendelssohnian school, beyond their deaths. This central concept exemplifies the spirit and essence of the dialogue. Not only are the *maskilim* characterised as interested in biblical translations done after their death, following up

<sup>107</sup>Gan Eden Vegehinom' ('Garden of Eden and Gehenna'), in Jelinek (ed.), vol. 5, pp. 44–45, and esp. *ibid.* p. 50 where 'hatzar mavet' is given as one of the names of Gehenna. See also Margaliyot, p. 225.

<sup>108</sup>p. 25; pp. 21–22.

<sup>109</sup>Friedlander's manuscript offers variants (*passim*).

<sup>110</sup>For *Alukah* as a reference to Gehenna, see Avodah Zarah 17a. On *Alukah*, *Toftah*, and other terms, see Maimonides, 'Hilhot Teshuvah' ('The Laws of Repentance') in *Mishneh Torah* (Deuteronomy), Jerusalem 1957, p. 247. Eiruvin 19a cites seven names for Gehenna, among them *Sheol* and *Tzalmavet*.

<sup>111</sup>Friedlander, 'Riv Haleshonot', p. 30; *idem*, *Bemisterei Hasatirah*, p. 30.



on their own exegetical work, but also they are portrayed as extremely interested posthumously in the continuous progress of Hebrew Haskalah.

Feder can thus be understood as arguing for the centrality of these founding fathers, and for the seminal importance of the early Haskalah, in German-Jewish history during the age of Enlightenment—and he urges his contemporary *maskilim* to follow along the fathers' pathway. The dialogue attempts to renew and enforce the ideological principles of the first *maskilim* and to continue the golden chain of early Haskalah in the manner set by the early *maskilim*. More than anything else he wishes to impart a sense of continuity in Haskalah ideology in particular and the *Weltanschauung* of continuity and succession in general.

By using a European literary genre, Feder proves himself a student of early German Haskalah. Following the early *maskilim* he combines European and Hebrew sources to enhance the ideology of Hebrew Enlightenment.