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The Genre of the fable in Haskalah literature in Germany

The phenomenon of the fable in German Haskalah literature has been widely cited by historians of Hebrew literature. Its role in early Haskalah, however, was assigned only marginal importance in most of these writings. The general interest in the fable today is dictated mostly by the interest contemporary Hebrew criticism has in the fable, which is rather marginal, and by the tendency to classify the fable as children's literature. Thus, critical and historical studies of Hebrew literature have not probed Haskalah writers' own attitudes toward the *Mashal*, the fable, nor the fact that in the 18th century the fable was considered a literary genre by itself in European literature, equal in importance to other „serious“ genres, and not necessarily as part of children's literature.

The Fable in Hebrew Criticism

One historian of Hebrew literature, F. Lachover, devoted a whole chapter to the Haskalah fabulists, summarizing and citing examples from the fable writings of Joel Brill, Aaron Wolfsohn, Juda Leib Ben Zeev, and Isaac Satanow. Lachover was aware of Brill's introductory article about the fable and of the impact of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing and his fable theories on Brill's own fables and theoretical writings about the fable, as discussed below. Lachover asserted that the Haskalah fable served as a substitute for satire and heralded its emergence.¹ Another historian, Joseph Klausner, attributed the alleged lack of satire in *Hame'asef* to Naphtali Herz Wessely's initial recommendation to the editors of *Hame'asef* – published in *Nachal Habesor*² – to refrain from using satire in the new journal. It was generally assumed that Wessely's advice was actually followed by the editors.³ Historians and critics cited this notion, yet no textual proof has been offered to substantiate it, and it has not been established whether the fable functioned in lieu of satire in the Hebrew journal or whether the fable served as a genre of its own. A study of this question must explore not only the various phenomena of the fable but also the publication of satiric pieces in the later issues of *Hame'asef*. Klausner mentioned the phenomenon of the fable in early Haskalah literature while discussing the contents of *Hame'asef*, and he cited several fables published in the journal. However, he did not discuss the essence of the fable.⁴

Literary historian Ch. N. Shapira, on the other hand, discussed the epigrammatic fable and the narrative fable as part of a long analysis of the Haskalah

fable. He emphasized that the maskilic fable manifested the budding of „actualism“ whose purpose was Haskalah-oriented and „reformatory“ and whose weapon was „stinging, satire“. Shapira quoted from and dwelt on some narrative fables by Brill, Wolfssohn, Ben Zeev, and Baruch Linda. The thrust of Shapira’s discussion centered on characterizing the maskilic narrative fable as having a realistic orientation.⁵

S. Halkin, too, discussed the fable and its types in his lectures on Hebrew literature, thus implying the importance he attached to its role in early Haskalah literature. He included the fable within Haskalah poetry, and divided it into three categories: the epigram-proverb, the animal and fowl fable, and the allegory. In his view, the fable affirms the „capacity of man to develop morally, intellectually, and aesthetically.“ According to Halkin, the goal of the fable was „to bring the individual Jew to achieve felicity.“ He discussed the narrative fable in *Hame’asef* and in *Bikurei Ha’itim*, the second Hebrew journal that was published in Vienna in the 1820s as part of the Galician Haskalah, citing Brill and his fables and discussing allegory as well. Halkin believed that the fable was both „very serious and very naïve“ in its purpose „to let the individual acquire values through it.“ In summary, the fable „intended to tell a story rather than to teach a moral, although initially it was intended especially to instruct.“⁶

A. Shaanan connected the phenomenon of the fable to the satiric and didactic trends that typified the writing of *Hame’asef* authors. He noted that the tradition of the fable was naturally attractive to the Maskilim because its literary form was close to their heart and to their literary proclivity. Consequently, he argued, in no other mode of creativity did they feel as much at home as in the fable, which is rich with a variety of forms and language, unlike any other branch of creative endeavor employed by the authors of *Hame’asef*. Shaanan also discussed the neo-biblical proverbs in Satanow’s *Mishlei Asaf*, and mentioned the other Haskalah fabulists: Brill, Ben Zeev, Wolfssohn, and Linda, as well as Christian Fürchtegott Gellert and the influence of his fables on the *Hame’asef* writers.⁷

S. Werses, too, studied the presence of fables in Haskalah literature. He published an anthology of the maskilic fable in which he included text sources concerning the theory of the fable and examples of various forms of fables and allegories. In addition, Werses published a seminal article on Isaac Satanow’s *Mishlei Asaf* and his neo-biblical wisdom proverbs, analyzing the concept of *mashal* and its placement within poetry, and also mentioned Brill’s classification of the fable.⁸

In literary criticism, several critics have used the term *mashal* while discussing poetry without clarifying the distinction between the wisdom proverb, known in Hebrew also as *mashal* or *meshal Chochmah* and the Aesopian fable. For example, Y. Friedlander, in his discussion of the definition of poetry in early Haskalah literature, cited quotations from Wessely, Satanow and others, which related both

poetry and the fable, yet Friedlander, interested mainly in poetry, did not elaborate on the connection between the two.⁹ Uzi Shavit, too, considered the fable as part of poetry, yet the example that he cited indicated that he meant the wisdom proverb and not the fable.¹⁰ Tsemach Tsamriyon, in his book on *Hame'asef*, cited several fables, elaborating on their themes.¹¹

In her work on Hebrew children's literature, Zohar Shavit examined translations of fables and their use in various readers and chrestomathies published by Haskalah writers Ben Zeev and Wolfssohn. She dwelled on the influence of German literature on the Hebrew fable and argued that most fables published in those readers were actually translations from German. There is, however, some awkward ambiguity in referring to *Mishlei Asaf*, the epitome of neo-biblical or pseudo-biblical proverbs, as fables.¹² Perhaps the source of this confusion lies in the writings of Uriel Ofek, children's literature scholar, who preceded Shavit in examining readers of Haskalah and considered *Mishlei Asaf* as a children's book.¹³

In the 1990s, Gideon Toury reviewed the maskilic fable, arguing, correctly, that the historians of Hebrew literature, in general, emphasized Lessing's impact on the Haskalah fabulists. However, they did not pay attention to the important influence of Gellert, as discussed below, of whose works twenty fables have been translated into Hebrew and published in early Haskalah. Toury discussed the acceptance of the German genre of the fable in Haskalah literature after the fable started to lose ground in German literature itself. One of Toury's arguments will be reviewed vis-à-vis the results of the current study. According to Toury, most of the fable proper was based on external sources, and the Maskilim allegedly did not attempt to draw elements from the intrinsic Hebrew cultural memory. As will be shown below, this assumption should not and could not be applied to the fables published in *Hame'asef*, even though it may be true regarding the chrestomathies published by Wolfssohn and Ben Zeev.¹⁴

The late phenomena of the fable, such as in the writings of Juda Leib Gordon in the second half of the 19th century, not discussed in this article, received noticeable attention in the critical literature.¹⁵ Similarly, the critical literature contains a vast number of studies on the classical, biblical, and midrashic fable in Hebrew and in other languages.¹⁶

In spite of these discussions on the fable, the critical literature, in general, neglected to address the phenomenon of the fable in Haskalah literature as an independent literary genre – not as children's literature – a genre which possessed unique and definitive literary characteristics even though it had a traditional affinity with some other genres.

Studying the genre of the *mashal* will help to understand better Haskalah literature as a literary phenomenon against the backdrop of its own time and its relation to other European literatures. The study will also shed light on the relations

of the fable to other literary genres which I discussed elsewhere in my studies. This article undertakes to identify and outline the phenomena of the fable in the ten volumes of *Hame'asef* (1783/4–1811). In addition, several contemporary attempts at a definition of the fable and its poetics by the Maskilim are reviewed vis-à-vis prevailing theories of the fable in European literatures. Similarly, literary characteristics of the fable as used by the Hebrew Haskalah are examined against the literary conventions of the genre in world literature. *Mashal*, in this context, refers to the fable and the parable. The maxim, or the epigram, and the proverb written after the fashion of biblical wisdom literature („*mishlei chochmah*“) that prevailed in the Haskalah are not included in this discussion even though they were published in *Hame'asef*. Fables published in readers and chrestomathies are mentioned only in passing since they were geared to schoolchildren for educational, pedagogical purposes.¹⁷

The Fable in 18th Century European Literature

The degree of popularity of the fable in 18th century European literature was unparalleled.¹⁸ Early in that century, Joseph Addison considered fables to be „the first pieces of Wit that made their appearance in the World, and have been still highly valued, not only in times of the greatest Simplicity, but among the most polite Ages of Mankind.“¹⁹

The fable was germane to the literary taste of 18th century European literature and its didactic tendencies in that it combined literary attractiveness and moral instruction, the ideal combination of good literature.²⁰ The fable was also suitable to the developing social awareness of European Enlightenment and to the growing interest in educational reform as an instrument for changing society. A moral instruction was considered to be a paramount obligation of education.²¹ Morality and utilitarianism were recognized as the inherent goals of good literature, and the fable, by its natural didactic inclination, was most appropriate for this purpose. Even though the fable was applied to education in general and to elementary education in particular, the genre of the fable was not limited to children or to children's literature. The fable was intended to be used by all ages, adults included, on all levels of perception and understanding.

By its very nature, the fable easily imparted „an agreeable lesson,“ as was asserted by the German poet, critic, and fable writer Christian Fürchtegott Gellert, thus avoiding the risk of possible outright rejection by the reader stemming from too direct a lesson. Gellert's works were familiar to the editors of *Hame'asef* and his fables were translated into Hebrew and published in the journal. His name was cited in *Hame'asef* as an authority on literature,²² even though at that latter part of

the century his literary views were considered out of date by many German literary critics.

Definitions of the European Fable

To attest to the popularity of the fable, suffice it to mention that many of the best European authors engaged in writing fables. Several, such as John Dryden, John Gay, William Russell, Robert Dodsley, Christian F. Gellert, and Gotthold E. Lessing, in addition to writing fables, also provided insights on the poetics of this genre in the introduction to their books or in separate essays on the fable.²³ The fable was a self-conscious genre, its authors being aware of the fable's unique character and its long literary tradition. Various fabulists in German and in Hebrew literatures, respectively, were conscious of their writing, and of the fable's generic traits. In the mid-18th century, there were heated debates among the aestheticians of the fable on the essence of the fable, its definition, its literary conventions, and its relation to other genres.

What was the fable and what did it encompass? These were questions that received different answers in different periods during the 18th century, depending on the literary conventions at the time. Early in the century and previously, the concept of *fable* was understood to refer to a legend or a mythological story, as defined in Bayle's dictionary in 1697.²⁴ Blackham cited various historical definitions of *fable* showing that in practical use, the term was applied to „a fictitious narrative,“ to „the plot of a dramatic (or epic) composition“, and to „a fable“ in the Aesopian mode, interchangeably.²⁵ However, even in formulating the poetics of the fable and in its application, there was a difference of opinion. For example, Dryden's translation of classical fables included also poetry.²⁶ Samuel Johnson defined the primary meaning of *fable* as „a feigned story intended to enforce some moral precept“.²⁷ The English critic Kames complained in mid-century of the improper use of the term *fable* and its application to regular stories that have no educational or entertaining element.²⁸ Later on in the century, however, the term *fable* was essentially applied to the Aesopian fable.

In the first half of the century, German writers and fabulists Friedrich von Hagedorn, Johann Christoph Gottsched, and Christian F. Gellert followed in the footsteps of Jean La Fontaine, the French fabulist, who exerted a great influence in Germany at that time.

It was Gottsched, in the first half of the century, who, as the recognized literary authority, elaborated on the nature of the fable and its literary conventions and discussed its general poetics. Gottsched's writings attested to influence of French classicism, an inclination that was not appreciated by German writers later in the

century. Following French fabulists, Gottsched considered the fable to be mostly a plot or a narrative. According to Gottsched, three steps were required to compose a fable. First, selecting „an instructive moral thesis“ to be the basis of a poetic composition. Second, selecting a proper event to illustrate vividly the moral. Third, applying the event and writing of the fable to exemplify the uniqueness of the genre. The fable should teach the common person some moral truth by using pleasant images and thus „sweetening“ the bitter lesson. Among other demands, Gottsched required that the fable be brief, devoid of lengthy writing. Human beings may play a role in the fable, according to Gottsched, and when they do, the literary classification of such a piece is a sub-category of the fable, namely the story or the short story.²⁹

Christian F. Gellert began publishing his fables and poems in the 1740s.³⁰ They received general recognition and were very popular until the 1780s, and Gellert was recognized as an authority on poetry and fables. Even though he rejected Gottsched's classical orientation, Gellert's own theories of the fable are said to be eclectic, based on ideas borrowed from his predecessors. For example, his concept of the fable identified it as a short fiction, which alluded to a certain subject; it was arranged in such a way as to be both enjoyable and beneficial. To Gellert, the most important quality of the fable was its imaginative invention. Thus, an „uninvented“ fable that relied on truth or on history alone was not a fable but a story. According to Gellert, the imaginative element in the fable would create a sense of wonder in the reader. Yet, Gellert, like his predecessors, emphasized that the fable must be based on a plausible occurrence. In summary, the fable, according to Gellert, was a combination of the natural and the inventive or the imaginative, of plausibility and wonder, and of art and didactic instruction. The fable and its moral must be simple and should not have any excess material. Yet, suitable embellishments that stemmed from the genuine art of the fable were acceptable in that they elevated the fable to the realm of poetry. The fable's moral should be a pleasing lesson, which helped the genre serve its pedagogic goal.

In 1756, Gellert wrote a harsh critique and analysis of three of his own selected fables, published some 15 years earlier, from which one can deduce his change of heart regarding the theory of the fable. Ostensibly, he was moving toward the concept of the fable that Lessing was to offer three years later, especially in excluding excessive embellishment from the fable.³¹

Lessing, who became a literary authority in mid-century, participated in the fable controversy that took place in Germany at that time. Earlier, he, too, was inclined toward the La Fontaine-style of fables, which was more poetical and ornamental. Following Gellert's aesthetic dictum regarding fables, Lessing began publishing his own in 1747 and then in 1753. Lessing's fables tended to be satirical and were written in rhymes, emulating La Fontaine and Gellert.³²

A few years later, in 1759, Lessing revised his literary theory of the genre and his mode of writing fables. He advocated the return to Aesop, thus rejecting the prevailing fable style of La Fontaine, Gellert, and their followers. This call for reform changed the poetics of the fable in Germany for the rest of that century. It established a new theory of the fable, with adjusted literary criteria and aesthetics. Lessing urged a return to the „concise, direct, morally purposeful fable that Aesop produced“,³³ in its pure form. Accordingly, the fable's goal was to instruct rather than to entertain, and thus it was supposed to be devoid of poetical devices and embellishment and free of rhymes and figurative language. Instead, the fable in Lessing's writing assumed the form of prose, and its goal was to suggest a moral lesson, rather than to have a satirical or polemical purpose.

In his essays on the fable, Lessing argued for a distinction between the fable and poetry as well as between poetry and didactic writing. In his view, „fable“ in general refers to the Aesopian fable. Lessing reviewed previous definitions and concepts of the fable, scrutinizing and reworking them from his standpoint. He emphasized that the fable was a narrative of action, rejecting the allegorical aspect that had been attributed to the fable. Thus, he affirmed that the fable was not supposed to create a similarity to something else, implied by the notion of allegory, but that the fable was what it was, in counter-distinction to Gellert. According to Lessing's theory, the fable must be realistic, presenting a plausible event, and not an imaginative action. Aware of their complexity, he classified fables into two types: the simple fable, which functioned on a non-allegorical level, and the complex fable, which contained some allegorical element. Lessing preferred the simple fable, while in the complex fable he rejected the notion of a pure allegory such as the personification of abstract qualities.³⁴

As part of his analysis of the fable, Lessing also addressed one inherent feature of the Aesopian fable that was discussed by the theoreticians of the fable, i.e., the use of animals. He adopted common explanations and notions that animals were employed because their quality and actions were universally recognized and thus they served as convenient symbols and were easily accepted by the reader. This explanation established the fable as allegorical. Lessing offered another explanation for the use of animals in the fable, saying that their use prevented any emotional involvement on the part of the reader and, in effect, facilitated a moral understanding of the fable.³⁵

Some of Lessing's above-mentioned views may be seen in his concise definition of the fable, as follows: „When we reduce a general moral principle to a specific case, grant this specific case reality, and invent a story from it in which the general principle is intuitively recognizable, this invention is called a fable.“³⁶

What may be of special interest to the student of Haskalah literature are the changing concepts of the fable in the 18th century and their relation to the short

story and to poetry. It should be pointed out that the perception of the fable by Haskalah writers and fabulists can be traced to the European theories of the fable. However, a similar important source of influence on the maskilic fable was the intrinsic Hebraic tradition of the fable. Evidently, the definitions by various Hebrew theoreticians were based on the Hebrew scriptures upon which they formulated their poetics of biblical poetry and of the biblical fable. These theories of biblical poetics served as springboards for discussion of contemporary literature, as was also the case in the writings of European theoreticians.³⁷

An overview of the poetics of the fable discussed so far reveals that despite their differences, fabulists who belonged to different schools embracing diverse theories of fable writing addressed several common topics. They presented their respective views on the issue whether the fable ought to generate a moral lesson, to instruct and teach, or, rather, to entertain and delight. They either stressed the allegorical nature of the fable, or else opposed it. Some highlighted the fable's basis as purely imaginative while others insisted that the fable must be realistic and thus ought to be written as an actual event, or as an event that could occur. Most of these theoreticians, nevertheless, shared similar views of the fable and its features, which were deemed prerequisites of the genre, such as its brevity, simplicity, unity of structure, and its foundation on truth.

However, formulating theories was no guarantee of their application by the theoreticians themselves. For when they wrote their own fables, they did not always practice the very rules of the genre that they had set for others.

The European phenomena of the fable and its poetics should provide better insight into its counterpart fable in Hebrew Haskalah literature, especially in *Hame'asef*, as discussed below.

The Attitude of Hame'asef's Editors toward the German Fabulists

It is difficult to establish conclusively the impact that these German fabulists made on the writers of Hebrew Haskalah and to ascertain the sources of that influence. Unquestionably, the Hebrew fabulists drew their inspiration from some of these German writers as well as from intrinsic Judaic sources, and thus it may be concluded that their influences, in general, were eclectic. This could be substantiated by the attitude of the journal's editors toward the fable and by their view of some European fabulists as manifested in review articles and essays on the poetics of the fable published in *Hame'asef*.

The permeation of the new poetics into Haskalah literature and its reception was evidenced in a review article of the book, *Yoshvei Tevel* (The Inhabitants of the World), published in 1789 in *Hame'asef*. In this article, which is indicative of the

change in the concept of the fable, the reviewer, L – e (the fabulist Joel Loewe Brill), launched a pungent critique on this book, whose author allegedly failed to follow the proper path of writing in Hebrew. Moreover, declared Brill, the author deviated from the literary traditions established by such Hebrew luminaries as Moshe Chayim Luzzatto, David Mendes, and Naphtali Herz Wessely in their poetical writings. Brill, then, cited the names of German writers Christian F. Gellert, Gottlieb Wilhelm Rabener, Friedrich von Hagedorn, Gotthold E. Lessing, Christoph Martin Wieland, Heinrich von Kleist, and Karl Wilhelm Ramler, as examples of fabulists whose works any reader would prefer to read than the book under review.³⁸ Yet, the very citation of these fabulists and writers, whose stand on the poetics of the fable varied, cannot by itself point out the spheres of influence on the Haskalah fable. The reviewer quoted from Lessing's definition of the fable, stating that „every fable has to be founded on the truth of one moral statement, attired in a definite specific event“.³⁹ The quotation from Lessing's late essay on the fable was indicative of the reception and acceptance of Lessing's late definition of the fable, based on his revised poetics of the genre, which was cited above. Consequently, from the fourth volume of *Hame'asef* (1788) the editors began to publish the fables in a section by themselves, as discussed below.

The editors' awareness of the fable as a European genre is discerned from the publication of adapted or translated fables from German, English, and French. The editors customarily appended a statement about their origins, such as: „A fable, translated from German.“ And a footnote would cite in German the name of the author and in most cases the original source of the fable.⁴⁰ At least six fables were identified by the editors of *Hame'asef* as translated from German and English, and their authors were cited as Gellert, Lessing, Ramler, and Solomon Gessner among the German fabulists, and the English writer John Gay. However, it is certain that many more fables were actually adaptations from other languages, a topic that will be discussed below. In addition, there were translations from the French of Arabian fables. This does not mean, however, that all other fables were in effect original, as will be mentioned later.

Theories of the Fable by Hame'asef Writers

The editors' appreciation of the fable is apparent from their treatment of the genre. Undoubtedly, they were aware of the genre and its place in literature; for in one of the first issues of the Hebrew periodical, in March/April 1784, they published an introductory article devoted to the fable. It was written by J...l – Joel Brill – a fabulist on his own right, and one of the future editors of the journal, and was titled *Mishlei Musar* (Fables of Morality or Moral Fables). Ostensibly, this term

was coined as a Hebrew equivalent to the prevailing expressions in European languages, such as „*moralische Fabeln*“, in German, „*moral fables*“, in English, or „*fables morales*“, in French, appearing in titles of published fables in these respective languages. As far as could be ascertained, the term *Mishlei Musar* did not appear in the classical Hebrew sources, and apparently was used for the first time in this period.⁴¹ Brill's article served as an introduction to the series of fables that were about to be published in the journal. The editors remarked that they had in their possession more fables by J...l, and that they planned to publish them in the future in the poetry section.⁴² Regarding the fable as a form of poetry was the accepted norm in European and German literatures until mid-century. As mentioned earlier, it was Lessing who reversed his position and argued for separating the fable from poetry.

Brill remarked in a footnote that his article did not purport to be a comprehensive discussion of the poetics and aesthetics of the fable. Nevertheless, it appears that the topic was close to his heart.⁴³ Brill's article exposed some of his views about the fable. For example, he highlighted one major feature, namely, the unique effect the fable had, as a work of literature, on the reader's soul. Brill explained that the use of emotions and senses, such as color and sound, affect the reader's soul much more than rational and logical abstractions. This emphasis on the direct impact of the fable on the reader is related to a similar notion concerning poetry, which was said to have a comparable effect.⁴⁴ Concurrently, Brill emphasized the benefits of the fable in „the paths of morality and instruction in the qualities of the soul“.⁴⁵ Thus, the fable served the improvement of man, his manners, and morality, as part of „Bildung“, as envisioned by Haskalah and by the „Aufklärung“ in general.

The unique qualities of the fable, according to Brill, lay in its ability to combine rational abstraction and generalization, on the one hand, and an individual's personal, emotional, and sensual experience, on the other, with an easily acceptable moral lesson. The result was a specific story that still contained general elements. This combination of the two components, the personal and the general, was deemed close enough to the reader to engage him, while bringing home the message. It lacked any threat to his personality that could have resulted in his rejecting the moral lesson altogether. For a general approach by itself may not be effective and may not have a personal impact on the reader. Whereas the specific, personal story may affect the reader but most likely would be rejected by him, because it may be construed as a personal threat. Brill addressed another topic discussed by the theoreticians of the fable, i.e., the employment of animals in the fables. He argued that the use of brutes as protagonists detached the reader from the event, and as he was not directly involved, the reader would be more inclined to accept the moral lesson of the fable.⁴⁶ In so doing, Brill presented the Hebrew

reader with an explanation about notions that were discussed by the European fabulists. Thus, he helped achieve one of the goals of Haskalah, namely, to bridge the two cultures and make Enlightenment concepts known to the Maskilim.

The full aesthetic treatment of the fable, its theory, its definition and its classification, was undertaken by Brill in his introduction to Psalms, *Zemiroth Israel* (Songs of Israel), where he discussed the nature and characteristics of biblical rhetoric and their influence.⁴⁷ Basing his discussion on the distinction between metaphor and simile, Brill related the fable to the metaphor. Like the metaphor, the fable created an abstraction of something and its actions and qualities, and related them to a similar object or to an imagined situation. A simile, on the other hand, established a comparison between two items. However, the metaphor and the fable borrowed a concept and applied it in a completely new and imagined context. Upon this definition of the fable, Brill addressed the rhetorical *mashal* in the Bible, dividing it into four categories. The first three were three types of epigrams: *mashal stami*, epigram; *mashal klali*, moral epigram; and *mashal mevo'ar*, symbol or symbolic epigram. The fourth category, *meshal chidah*, was a parable or allegory. It should be noted that Brill included the biblical Jotham's fable in the latter. He then extended his discussion beyond the biblical phenomena and in a footnote addressed the issue of the *mashal* in world literature, which, he wrote, was known as *fable* in other European languages. Brill defined the fable as having a general moral statement as its moral lesson (*nimshal*). Thus, according to Brill, the fable is based on a specific, singular event that did not exist in reality but was only contrived from the imagination. Consequently, he referred to it as *mashal murkav*, namely, a complex fable, for it incorporated almost all of the four kinds of *meshalim* mentioned above. This type of fable, he wrote, is not found in the Bible.⁴⁸ Apparently, Brill adopted Lessing's classification and terminology (such as *mashal murkav* – complex fable) but not Lessing's meaning or definition.⁴⁹

Looking for Brill's sources of influence in formulating his theory of the fable leads to the conclusion that they are eclectic. For example, it looks as though Brill followed Gellert concerning the fable's effect on the reader, as evidenced in Gellert's essay.⁵⁰ However, Brill's classification of the fable in *Zemiroth Israel* apparently relied on Lessing. As mentioned earlier, Brill seemed to use Lessing's classification, however not in the latter's context and meaning.⁵¹ These two sources notwithstanding, Brill also quoted from Johann Gottfried Herder's writings on the biblical fable.⁵² It should be noted that Brill's references were not confined to external, Germanic sources, for he also cited the writings of Isaac Euchel and Isaac Satanow on the origins of the term *mashal*.⁵³

The view that one objective of literature, as literature, was to educate and instruct, and especially to inculcate morality, improve manners, and refine customs, prevailed in Haskalah and was considered part of its poetics and aesthetics. And

thus, on the occasion of Brill's introductory article, the editors of *Hame'asef* presented the genre of the fable as one of the educational and literary tools for the implementation of the ideology of Hebrew Haskalah.

Another major author of early Haskalah, Satanow, was known mostly for *Mishlei Asaf*, a book of proverbs, which he wrote in the style of biblical wisdom literature. This was Satanow's contribution to Haskalah literary experimentation of the genre of neo-biblical proverbial epigram. What is less known is that Satanow also wrote Aesopian fables, which were interspersed unnoticeably in the myriad of little tales in his *Sefer Hachizayon* (Book of Vision). In addition to writing proverbs and fables, Satanow contributed to the corpus of theories on aesthetics, especially on Hebrew poetry, and also discussed the fable. In the introduction to this book, titled *Melech Hashir* (Craft of Poetry), Satanow discussed the aesthetics of poetry, citing the use of figurative and poetical language and epigrammatic proverbs.⁵⁴ To illustrate his point figuratively, Satanow cleverly used the medium of the fable itself saying, „I will present to you a fable on the topic of the poetical imagery (*hatziyur hashiri*). Thus is the fable: The King of India waged war...“⁵⁵ In addition, he devoted a whole chapter to a discussion of medieval *Mishlei Shu'alim* (Fox Fables) and talmudic fables. Satanow also cited several Aesopian fables that featured the wolf and the fox, adjusting some of their satiric targets to his own time.⁵⁶

Isaac Euchel, an important Haskalah writer and editor of *Hame'asef* and commentator of the biblical book of Proverbs, also dealt with the aesthetics of biblical poetry and fable. In his introduction to Proverbs, he discussed the epigrammatic proverb and its definition. Concurrently, he explained the nature of allegory, which he, like Brill, identified as *mashal chidoti*.⁵⁷ Concentrating on allegory rather than on the fable, he defined the former as the use of attributes that were universally recognizable and easily identifiable (such as the swiftness of the eagle and the greatness of the cedar). Also, an allegory would enable the reader to conjure up vivid images, so that the reader, in turn, could comprehend the intention of the allegory and its message. Subsequently, Euchel discussed several aspects of the fable. Based on these definitions, one can assume that Euchel perceived allegory as being part of fable, in contrast to Lessing's revised position.

Shalom Hacoen, *Hame'asef's* editor in its second period, was also a fabulist, who classified the fable as part of moral literature. The fable „is an important part of morality and ethics,“ he stated in the introduction to his collection, *Mishlei Agur* (Fables of Agur). Like the other fabulists in early Haskalah, as mentioned before, Hacoen stressed the fable's unique characteristic of directly affecting the listener's soul. Hacoen was one of the few Hebrew fabulists to address the subject of the non-biblical *mashal*, namely, the fable. He made a distinction between the exemplum and the fable, referring to the former as *mashal ma'asi* (practical fable), which would be an „example from an event that happened, from which one drew

some moral lesson. “ In parentheses, he explained in German using Hebrew letters: „*Exempel, Beispiel*“, namely, exemplum. The fable, on the other hand, was „an imaginary story that never took place which is told as if it did occur.“ He called the latter „*meshal chidayi (fabel)*.“⁵⁸ By this time, in 1799, the Hebrew fabulist was able to discern a clear demarcation between the medieval-like moral exemplum and the Aesopian fable. It is worthwhile noting that Hacoheh was sensitive to the Jewish background and intrinsic tradition of the fable, emphasizing its relationship to Jewish ethical literature. This intrinsic orientation attests to the Jewish sphere of influence affecting the maskilic fable, which may disprove the assumption in some critical literature that the Maskilim owe their fables mostly to the German fabulists.⁵⁹

Ten years later, in 1810, Hacoheh dealt again with the subject of the fable in a review article that he published in *Hame'asef* under his editorship. In his article, the reviewer praised this edition of Luzzatto's *Leshon Limudim* (A Scholarly Language, or Skilled Tongue), published in 1810 by Dov Ginzburg. Hacoheh quoted from the publisher's introduction, placing the fable as part of epic poetry and, in particular, as part of „the poetic tale“.⁶⁰ Apparently, Ginzburg based his classification of the fable on the 17th and early 18th centuries' classic perception of the fable being part of poetry.

The essence of the fable and its kinds became clearer when Hacoheh summarized Ginzburg's internal division of the poetic tale. The first category was that of „fox fables or Aesop fables ... Most of them contain conversations of animals, fowls, palm trees and inanimate objects, and they tell concretely of a specific conversation or event, and from the story there will emerge a lesson of a general moral preposition or experiential lesson.“ One can detect Brill's influence in Ginzburg's definition and his use of terms. In this category Ginzburg also cited examples from biblical fables, such as Jotham's and Nathan's fables – mentioned in many of the European discussions and in the general introductions to the poetics of the fable – as well as Rabbi Akiba's fox and fish fable in tractate Berachot, and the medieval fables in *Mishlei Shu'alim*, *Ben Hamelech Vehanazir* (The Prince and the Hermit), and more recently, in *Hame'asef*. The second category cited, within the fable, was „*meshal chidah* (allegory)“. Here, too, Ginzburg relied on Brill's terminology in his introduction to Psalms, which was cited above. Ginzburg went on to offer additional categories for the story, cited also by the reviewer. It is possible to detect in Ginzburg's theory and in Hacoheh's presentation a development in the concept of the Aesopian fable as perceived in the second part of the 18th century, which distinguished between the fable and allegory but still referred to the latter as *meshal*. Ginzburg rejected Brill's classifying the Jotham fable as allegory and placed it as an Aesopian fable.⁶¹

Among the other fabulists was Juda Leib Ben Zeev. He, too, contributed to the theory of the fable in the introduction to his chrestomathy, *Bet Hasefer* (The School), which contained fables among other reading material. He affirmed the inherent capacity of the fable to improve the youths' moral virtues. Ben Zeev, too, highlighted the unique attribute of the fable to affect the listener and bring the message to him in way that regular narrative will not be able to do.⁶²

This central notion is crucial for understanding the Maskilim's perception of the fable; namely, the fable's ability to extend its message beyond the immediate text and context and to require the reader's involvement in deciphering the moral lesson. Very much like Shalom Hacoen, Ben Zeev stressed the ethical aspect of the fable, which could indicate its affinity with the Hebrew tradition, even though ethical and moral elements of the fable were emphasized also in the European fable. With the exception of Ginzburg and Ben Zeev, most other attempts at definition were rather limited in scope because their authors concentrated mostly on biblical poetics.

Place of the Fable in Hame'asef

In mapping and reviewing the fables published in *Hame'asef*, this writer consulted his own *Sha'ar Labaskalah*, an annotated and computerized index of *Hame'asef*, published in 2000.⁶³ Under the subject heading of „*Mashal*“, the index lists 55 fables published in the ten volumes of the Hebrew journal. It also lists a few attempts at a definition of the genre. Even though the phenomena of the fable are not impressive in scope or number, because fables, by their nature, are small in size, their frequent publication in *Hame'asef* attests to the importance of the genre in Hebrew Haskalah, an importance duplicated in European Enlightenment literature. In addition, if one takes into consideration the publication and concurrent republication of many fables in school readers and catechisms, whose authors published their fables also in *Hame'asef* (such as Aaron Wolfsohn, Juda Leib Ben Zeev, Shalom Hacoen and Juda Jeiteles⁶⁴) then the scope of the Haskalah fables may be impressive indeed, although perhaps not as wide-spread as the European fable.

These 55 fables do not constitute one homogeneous kind of fables, nor do they adhere to a single concept of the fable. They are scattered throughout ten volumes of the journal, from 1783 to 1811, and were written by many fabulists. These fables represent a wide spectrum of literary concepts and literary schools. Among them are fables of varied qualities, which have diverse literary and fabulist characteristics. Yet, the sum total of these fables portrays an overall picture of the state of the fable in early Haskalah in Germany.

Various kinds of fables appeared in *Hame'asef*, namely: Aesopian fables, allegories, narrative fables, and poetical fables. Among the poetic fables are rhymed fables and dialogue fables. Among the fables published in *Hame'asef* were Aesopian fables, or animal fables, in the classical tradition, found in both European and Hebrew literatures. In order to qualify as an Aesopian fable, a classical fable or its modern rendition must adhere to three prerequisites prescribed by Perry: (a) „it must be obviously and deliberately fictitious, whether possible or not“; (b) „it must purport to be a particular action, series of actions, or an utterance that took place once in past time through the agency of particular characters“; and (c) „it must be told, at least ostensibly, not for its own sake as a story... but for the sake of a point that is moral, paraenetic or personal.“⁶⁵ These fundamentals of the Aesopian fable attempt to summarize the general concept of the fable while glossing over obvious disagreements about the definition of the genre, as discussed above. Thus, answering this definition, for example, is the fable, *Mishpat Evili* (A Silly Judgment), published in *Hame'asef*,⁶⁶ featuring the stag who is proud of his long horns but is ashamed of his thin legs (discussed below). It is based on an Aesopian fable, which was also adapted by Lessing into German and by Wolfssohn into Hebrew in his *Avtylyon*.⁶⁷ Generally speaking, the Haskalah Aesopian fable retained the main structure and the principal traits of the general Aesopian fable. It, too, has animals and beasts assuming human characteristics, having the extraordinary ability to speak like humans, while their acts and words do teach human beings moral lessons and universal truths.

However, not all the fables published in *Hame'asef* follow that pattern. The editors elected to include allegories under the heading *Mashal*, or in the section devoted to *Mishlei Musar*. In these allegories, characters were given names of human traits, such as in the fable *Rahav* (Pride).⁶⁸ In this fable, the human attribute of „pride“ – named as such – appears as a character. Lessing's rejection of the allegorical element in the fable apparently was not accepted by this Haskalah fabulist.⁶⁹ The editors had no hesitation publishing it as a *mashal*, and inserted it immediately following the above-mentioned Aesopian fable *Mishpat Evili*.

Among other categories of fables published in *Hame'asef* were the narrative fables and the poetical fables. Fables such as *Hagamad Ha'anaki* (The Gigantic Dwarf) (*Hame'asef*, I, 166),⁷⁰ or *Shnat Haresha'im* (The Wicked's Sleep; I, 151–152), are distinguished from the Aesopian fable in that they are stories or poems with a moral, but their characters are not animals or beasts. The opening line of such a story may state, for example, „and it came to pass in the summer ...“ which is indicative of its narrative orientation.

Form of the Fable: Prose or Poetry?

These fables were published both in prose and in poetry. Some of them were rhymed fables, such as *Ha'aryeh Vehashu'al* (The Lion and the Fox) (*Hame'asef*, IV, 43–44), and *He'ani Vehachalom* (The Poor Man and the Dream) (*Hame'asef*, IV, 44–45), both by Baruch Linda. In addition, some of these fables not only had rhymes, but they were typeset as poems with unjustified lines, such as *Ha'ishbah Vehatanin* (The Woman and the Crocodile) (*Hame'asef*, IV, 80) and *Ha'ishbah Vehadevorah* (The Woman and the Bee) (*Hame'asef*, IV, 95–96), both by Aaron Wolfsohn. The poetical nature of the fable was sometimes enhanced in Hebrew because of the introduction of the full *nikud*, vocalization, employed in poetry, a unique phenomenon that did not exist in European languages. Several of the rhymed fables assumed the format of the dialogue, such as *The Lion and the Fox*, cited above, by Linda, and *The Woman and the Crocodile* by Wolfsohn. Many other fables, though, were in prose.

These varieties of forms, styles, and modes of the Hebrew fable in *Hame'asef* are indicative of a prevailing eclectic concept of the fable among the Maskilim. Nevertheless, it is incumbent upon the student of the fable to check whether there is any overall concept, or underlying theory, in the perception of the fable by the editors of the Hebrew journal. A general editorial perception may be deduced from the manner in which the fables were published in the journal and from selected location of their publication in relation to other material. In the first three volumes of *Hame'asef*, the fables were generally published in the poetry section. Brill's introductory article on the fable was published, naturally, in the article section.⁷¹ The method of positioning the fables vis-à-vis the other material indicates that the fable indeed was viewed as being part of poetry, and was classified under poetry. A few examples are discussed below:

In the poetry section in volume 1 the editors published a poem by Ramler titled *Legever Maskil El Hagilah* (To a Learned Man on Joy) (I, 97–100), and immediately following there appeared a subtitle, *Musar Haskel* (Teaching Moral, or Instruction Lesson), and then two stanzas of vocalized and rhymed poetry. Following these poems, the fable *Riv Hashemesh Veharu'ach* (The Quarrel of the Sun and the Wind), was published. Even though this was a fable in prose, it was included in the poetry section because it was a fable. In a footnote, the editors remarked that this was the first of the fables that they published in connection with Brill's introductory article cited above. Evidently, a prose fable was considered as poetry and was published together with other poems.

This phenomenon was repeated in the first three volumes of the journal as more fables written in prose were published in the poetry section, such as the prose fable *Haro'eh Vehamechaker* (The Shepherd and the Philosopher), by John

Gay (I, 118–120), adapted by Chayim Köslin. Later, in the same volume, following several poems in a poetry section, was included also a rhymed fable *Ha'av Uvanav* (Father and His Sons) by Gellert (I, 150), adapted by Joseph Altern, and immediately afterwards, two fables in prose: *Hashemesh Vehaneshet* (The Sun and the Eagle), and *Shmat Haresha'im* (I, 151–152). Another interesting proof for the inclusion of the fable within poetry can be found in volume 3. The poetry section (I, 1–8) included two poems, the second of which was numbered „2“. Afterwards, a segment published under the number „3“ was actually a narrative fable in prose, by J-I (Brill), with the title *Hanekamah. Mashal* (Vengeance. A Fable). The definition „mashal“ was attached to the title for immediate clarification about the nature of this piece. Indeed, it is a prose fable, conceived to be part of poetry.

In summary, the fable, whether in a poetry or prose form, was included in the poetry section. Thus, it may be concluded that the classical concept that categorized the fable as part of poetry – a concept that prevailed for a long time⁷² – was accepted by the editors of *Hame'asef*. They stated as much in a note to Brill's introductory article, indicating that the fables would be included in the poetry section (I, 88).

However, as the literary taste of the editors of *Hame'asef* has changed, a new concept began to emerge, which established the fable as a literary genre of its own. Beginning with volume 4, in 1788, the fables were published in a separate section under the heading *Mishlei Musar* (Moral Fables). The title of the new section, as discussed above, fits the concept of the fable as the carrier of an ethical lesson and as a vehicle for teaching morals – ideas that were fostered by most fable aestheticians of the eighteenth century.

Apparently, the transition to this new literary perception started in volume 3 (1786), in which the editors published in the articles section a series of Arabian fables („Mishlei Arav“), with an introduction by Shimeon B. R. Z. (son of R. Zecharia, or Sanwil). The heading „Mishlei Arav“ appeared in the same size letters as the other section headings. However, this heading lacked the alphabetical enumeration that characterized all section titles (such as: a. poetry; b. articles, etc.). Following B. R. Z.'s introduction, the „fables,“ consisting of moral instructions and wisdom phrases, were published in the article section (III, 103–106). Likewise, the continuation of these „fables“ was printed in the article section.

This apparent hesitation about the concept of the fable was not unique to Haskalah literature. A similar ambiguity about the fable existed in European literatures of the time, resulting from the variety of literary schools in France and Germany and their respective definitions of the fable. The complexity of the fable, too, contributed to the confusion. The shift in the concept of the fable in *Hame'asef* came on the heels of changes in editorial policy, in 1788, and the transfer of the editorial center from Königsberg to Berlin. It is quite possible that one of

the rising stars, Joel Brill, as mentioned before, a fabulist in his own right and the author of the introduction to the fable, who was to become an editor later on, was instrumental in forming the new concept of the fable. Thus, from volume 4 on, the fables were allotted a separate section of their own, titled *Mishlei Musar*, and were not included in the poetry section.

The phenomena of the fable in *Hame'asef* represented the collective effort of a group of writers for a period of 28 years (1783–1811) in ten volumes of the periodical, whose editors invited them to submit material for publication. The editors then selected those submissions which, in their opinion, were worthy of publication and rejected others that they did not consider fit to print. In addition, one may suppose that the editors encouraged writers and others from their immediate literary circle, such as Joel Brill, prior to his becoming an editor, to submit fables to the journal. Consequently, one should be careful to formulate any definitive conclusions concerning literary trends based only on the fables in *Hame'asef*. On the other hand, it should not be assumed that there were no leading literary theories of the fable, whether following Gellert, Lessing, or other fable theoreticians. Thus, the inventory of the fables in *Hame'asef* does reflect the literary state of the fable in early Haskalah.

The Phenomena of the „Original“ Fables

Many of the fables published in *Hame'asef* appear at first sight to be original. Ostensibly, they bear an author's name or an abbreviation of his name, and at times, the author's name appears also in the volume's table of contents. However, this by itself should not be the sole criterion for establishing the originality of a given piece. Evidently, several „original“ fables were actually adaptations, yet they bore the name of a Haskalah author. It is apparent that the editors were not careful to distinguish between original writers and adapters of fables. More difficult to answer, is the related question of the literary influence that had been exerted on the Haskalah fable. World literature manifests a rich tradition of translation, adaptation, and recycling of fables, transplanting them from one culture to another and from one language to another. Haskalah literature followed in the customary path of adapting fables from the general corpus. Thus, it may not be a simple undertaking to trace accurately the indebtedness of the Haskalah fable to the classical fable or to track the permeation of universal and early Hebraic motifs into the maskilic fable. Nevertheless, an attempt will be made to look into some aspects of this topic, although the full task exceeds the scope of the present article.

An example of an adaptation is the fable *Riv Hashemesh Veharu'ach* (The Quarrel

of the Sun and the Wind) (I, 101–102). The fable was signed J...l (Joel Brill), without any indication that it was not an original fable. However, this fable is based on *Shemesh Veru'ach Ve'ish* (The Sun, the Wind and a Man) by Berechyah Hanakdan in his *Mishlei Shu'alim*. Yet, what appears to be a fable of a Hebrew origin may in fact have as its source the Aesop's fable *The North Wind and the Sun*.⁷³ One may safely conclude that the main idea was drawn from one of these two sources; however, Brill adapted the fable and rewrote it in his own way, adding new components to the story, inserting new items that had not been featured previously in the original versions, such as a hat, and filling in certain gaps.

The fable tells of the contest between the wind and the sun vying as to which will cause the traveler to remove his coat and his hat – the cold, piercing wind or the warm sun? There is a distinct difference between the moral lessons of the original Aesop and the medieval-Hebrew fables and Brill's fable. Aesop's moral lesson is, „This fable shows that persuasion is often more effective than violence.“⁷⁴ The Hebrew moral, printed under the title, states, „The wise man will do with his wisdom more than the strong man with his strength.“ The moral lesson at the end is more elaborate, explaining that the wise man will do better than the strong man with the latter's power, for the words of the wise are spoken softly in a way that they will be easily accepted. Thus, the moral is that wisdom is stronger than might.

However, the maskilic version has a different objective, and its moral deals with the way to reprove an individual and to correct his ways, stating in effect that a gentle reproach will bring the desired results. The moral concentrates on the ways to improve a person in order to implement a social or cultural change. It is indeed a universal message, yet it harbors a subtle maskilic message, signaling that change of clothes and removal of the hat should be done in moderation. These Haskalah motifs emerge out of the lines of this fable, which Brill recruited to serve his particular time and his specific needs. This is an example of an adaptation of a universal fable to the needs of Haskalah, transforming it into an almost „original“ fable.

Another example of a maskilic fable whose origin is unknown is the fable *Ha'achbar Uvno* (The Mouse and His Son). It is a one and one-half page-long fable-story written in prose, by J...l (Joel Brill) (IV, 60–61). In the story, the mouse warns his son to watch out for the cat. Not knowing what a cat looks like, the son is afraid of the horse and the ox. Twice the son comes to his father in great fear of his supposed enemy. Having failed twice, he finally comes back to tell his father about the positive experience he has had in meeting a very nice, humble, and „holy“ animal, resembling „a righteous person“. As the little mouse describes the spots on his new friend's fur, the elder mouse breaks the news with a warning

that this indeed is his enemy. The fable is told as a story with detailed narrative in biblical Hebrew, rich in descriptions and containing a developing plot. A rhymed moral tells the reader that appearance may be deceiving. The moral lesson is universal, yet it is obvious that Brill has cleverly introduced into that fable some elements that strongly hint to the struggle of Haskalah with its adversaries. The loaded expressions describing the cat as „a righteous person,“ „this holy one“, and „don't be deceived by his looks because he is a hypocrite“, are indicative of a hidden agenda which stemmed from the Haskalah context. However, the message is also universal in nature and can easily fit similar circumstances in other times and in different settings. Although the fable's origins, as mentioned earlier, are not known, one thing is certain: Brill wrote it for his immediate surroundings and milieu.

Another fable, cited earlier, *Mishpat Evili* (A Silly Judgment) (I, 132), also was published under the name J...I, with no indication that it was not original rather than an adaptation. Letteris, in his edition of *Hame'asef* in 1862, noted that the fable was translated from Lessing.⁷⁵ However, the origin is in Aesop's fable *The Stag at the Spring and the Lion*.⁷⁶ The fable features a light-headed stag who is very proud of his beautiful antlers yet ashamed of his thin, feeble legs. He has a change of heart, belatedly, when pursued by a lion; his thin legs help him run away while his antlers, alas, became entangled in the thicket, causing him to be devoured by the lion. The moral was given at the end: „On this, the wise man said: Grace is deceptive, beauty is illusory, the good and the beneficial should be praised.“ The slogan of Haskalah's aesthetics was thereby declared as the author paraphrased a verse from the classical tradition of Hebrew letters, from the book of Proverbs.

The same fable was adapted also by Aaron Wolfsohn and published in his school reader, *Avtalyon*, under the title, *Ha'ayal Vetzalmo* (The Stag and Its Image). His moral, intended for students, was „So is the way of the fools/ for they judge only by what they see/ therefore they confound good with evil and evil with good.“⁷⁷

What is the common denominator of the „original“ maskilic fables? Some of these exemplify a general epigram or illustrate a biblical proverbial verse or a saying of the sages from *Pirkei Avot* (Ethics of the Fathers). Evidently, the tendency is to „convert“ a universal theme and re-present it with a definitive Judaic coloration.

For example, in a series of four fables, attributed to Yechiel Euchel, Isaac Euchel's brother, each fable ended with a concluding quotation from a verse in Proverbs. One such verse, „The Lord made everything for a purpose, even the wicked for an evil day“ (Proverbs 16:4), is appended to the fable *Rechavam Harasha* (Rehoboam the Wicked), discussed below. Another verse summarizes the moral of the fable *Amnon Haná'ar* (Amnon the Lad) (IV, 175): „He who lays in store during the summer is a capable son, but he who sleeps during the harvest is an incompetent“

(Proverbs 10:5). With the employment of verses from Proverbs, these fables appear to be original pieces, based on Judaic sources. This combination of a universal fable with a Judaic-oriented message fits nicely into the creative scheme of Haskalah. The fabulist endeavored to teach a moral lesson, which had its roots in the proverbial texts of the Jewish corpus by means of the genre of the fable.

Another fable, *Rechavam Harasha* (IV, 174–175), is a moral fable-story exemplifying a wisdom verse that ends the fable. The fable tells of a dream that Rechavam had. In the dream, an angel saved Rechavam, characterized immediately as „wicked,“ from death. Rechavam, in turn, offered a sacrifice, giving thanks for his rescue. The angel appeared again, telling Rechavam that his punishment by death for his wickedness was imminent and that it will be carried out in public so as to teach people a lesson. The fable illustrates the point that the wicked was saved only to be punished in public for everybody to witness and learn. The fable appears to be Judaic in nature, tone, content, and orientation. It attempts to create an authentic atmosphere of ancient times.

The fourth fable in this series is *Avner Hakorem* (Avner the Vine Grower) (IV, 176). Before his death, Avner told his sons that he had left them a treasure in the ground. After his death, the sons searched the vineyard for the treasure, clearing the stones and tilling the soil, but they did not find any treasure. Meanwhile the vineyard bore grapes, and the sons realized that it was, in fact, the treasure that their father had hidden for them, and they praised their father for his wisdom. The story ends citing the verse „He who tills his land shall have food in plenty“ (Proverbs 12:11, 28:19). The fable has a universal setting, intending to convey a general moral through the biblical verse. The writer of the fable used biblical Hebrew and biblical narrative conventions, such as opening the story in the biblical style of *Kerem hayah le'Avner* (Avner had a vineyard...).⁷⁸

Structure of the Maskilic Fable in Hame'asef

Structurally, the maskilic fable followed the convention of the classical fable in its use of the promythium, the heading. B. E. Perry defined promythium as „a brief statement concerning the application of a fable made by the author before he begins the narrative.“ Initially, the promythium was established in the classical fable to index it, according to its moral application. Later on, the promythium exceeded its original purpose and was used also as „an explanation intended to clarify its meaning“ and the lesson taught. In time, as the promythium began to serve as explanation, it was placed at the end of the fable, where it belonged, and not before the fable. The *epimythium*, as it is known, is the author's own moral put at the end of the fable.⁷⁹

In *Mishlei Shu'alim* there is a rhymed sub-heading, which summarizes the fable, and an epimythium, rhymed and formed as a poem, presenting the moral. Ben Zeev, in his fables, used the epimythium but referred to it as *melizah*.

The use of the heading was less common in the Haskalah *marshal* than the use of a summary at the end of a given fable. For example, the heading at the top of the fable *Shnat Haresha'im*, by J...l (I, 151), says: „The wicked's sleep is beneficial to them as well as to the world.“ This promythium, based on Sanhedrin 71,⁸⁰ presents the general tenor of the fable in an epigrammatic title. Even though this heading precluded any hidden surprises, it was general enough not to reveal the individual slant of this particular fable. Thus, the reader could now explore the skill of the fabulist in weaving the story that should exemplify the known heading. The fabulist and his friend watch Rechavam, a typological name for a wicked person, sleeping peacefully, undisturbed. The fabulist wonders how the wicked came to sleep restfully, and his friend explains that the Almighty cast a deep sleep upon the wicked so that the righteous may have some rest and peace. The promythium contains a universal message that has been dressed in Hebrew attire, and thus it helped make the fable look originally Hebraic. This fable, too, has narrative qualities exemplified by its story-like beginning, „And so it came to pass in the summer“. It also contains a dialogue between the characters, which enriches the narrative. The fable appears to be founded on faith and on the belief in providence. Yet, this faith is not without some ironic twist, an in-depth view, and a moral: the reader is asked to look into the essence of things and their meaning. This fable appears to be a moral story, told as an exemplum.⁸¹

Another type of promythium appeared on top of a fable addressing „my brothers and friends, members of *Chevrat Dorshei Leshon Ever* (Society of the Seekers of Hebrew)! This heading of the fable *Hakochav He'avim Veharu'ach* (The Star the Clouds and the Wind), by Ch. K. (Chayim Köslin) (I, 150), connected the fable to the group of Maskilim associated with *Hame'asef* and with the Haskalah movement, in order to hint at the timely message of the fable and its relevance. The fable tells of a new star that appeared in the sky. The clouds were jealous of this new star and schemed to blanket it so that people would not see it. As they were scheming, a strong wind blew up and scattered the clouds away from the star. The moral came immediately afterwards: „Whatever happened to the star will happen to anything new under the sun – and whatever happened to the clouds will happen to all the zealots.“ The zealots were those who wished to keep the old and reject the new and the innovative. The wind, „*Ru'ach*,“ which also means „spirit“ in a non-physical sense, will overcome all the obstacles. And thus this Haskalah writer encouraged his fellow Maskilim to pursue their goals tenaciously and to disregard adversarial acts. The concluding summary, the

epimythium, provided the timely message, and thus it is evident that the fable dealt with a Haskalah-related topic.

A dual use of both a promythium and an epimythium appeared in the fable *Hagamad Ha'anaki* (The Gigantic Dwarf) (I, 166). The heading explained the intriguing oxymoron in the title, *The Gigantic Dwarf*, stating, „There is none smaller than those with a small mind.“ However, this epigrammatic explanation provokes the reader to probe further as the riddle within the oxymoron becomes even more acute. For what makes this dwarf gigantic? From the second line, one may deduce that the dwarf was also of a small mind. And indeed he was jealous of his younger brothers who were bigger than he was. In order to overcome his deficiency, the dwarf built gigantic stilts and climbed on them. Watching from far, people said, „here comes the giant.“ However, as he drew near they recognized him and mocked him and his stupidity. To teach them a lesson and show them that he could be even bigger, he climbed to the top of the structure, but then he appeared even smaller, and to the onlookers, he seemed to be „like a grasshopper.“ The epimythium, which summarized succinctly the moral of the fable and its essence, said, „For this reason the wise has said: Man's pride will degrade him.“ The choice of the verse from Proverb (29:23) strengthens the familiar moral lesson and brings it closer to the Hebrew reader, while making the fable look inherently Hebraic.

The use of the epimythium was more prevalent in the Haskalah fables. In most of them there was a concluding summary in rhymes and *nikud*, applied to poems, such as in the fable *Ha'achbar Uvno* (The Mouse and His Son) (IV, 60–61), which was cited above. The concluding statement addressing „my friend“ said, „you should not pass judgement, my friend, based on appearance alone.“ The message transcended the boundaries of the fable framework and its milieu and moved on to the human sphere, even though it ostensibly extended the advice of the father-mouse to his son: „Don't be deceived by his looks because he is a hypocrite.“

At times, the external moral, which is the lesson offered by the fabulist, went through a transformation and was included within the fable itself, offered by the protagonist, who was the last speaker. His statement appeared in a different typeface as though it were the epimythium in the classical tradition. Such is the example found in the fable *Hanekamah* (Vengeance) by J-1 (Joel Brill) (III, 8–9). The fable featured a poor beggar who asked for help from a nobleman characterized as an evil person. Not only did the nobleman not give the beggar some charity, but instead he threw a stone at the beggar's outstretched hand. The poor man kept the stone in his pocket, waiting for a day of vengeance. The occasion came when the nobleman was out of favor with the king, who chose to disgrace the nobleman by

ordering him to ride a donkey in public. At first the poor man wanted to take revenge, but when he saw how miserable the nobleman was, he decided against it, saying: „Vengeance will not gratify unless the enemy is mighty; however, when he himself [the enemy] is suppressed and downtrodden, the avenger is cruel.“ This is a general fable, transcending cultural and national boundaries, which intends to educate and teach a lesson.

In the fable *The Lion and the Fox*, by Linda, the moral was offered by the lion, the last one to speak, and it was printed in the regular font, as if it were part of the fable (IV, 43–44). This is a rhymed fable that also contained a rhymed dialogue. The fox revealed to the lion that one of animals was instigating a mutiny against the king of the animals. The lion wants to know the identity of the rebel, and once he learned that it was the donkey, he said that he did not intend to take revenge on such a miserable animal, dismissing either his possible love or his hate. The lion himself provided the moral, which was universal. However, there are also fables without any moral lesson in the concluding lines.

Sometimes the Hebrew fabulist addressed his reader in the beginning of the fable or in its end, and communicated with him. On top of the narrative fable, under the rather unoriginal title *Musar Haskel* (Teaching Moral, or, Instruction Lesson), there was a message for the reader, addressing him: „To my friend the young reader.“ Following the narrative, the author conducted a direct conversation, in second person, with his „young reader,“ explaining the moral of the story. He wrote, „I wrote this fable about you; now, young reader, let’s reason together; if you were in place of this traveler...“ (II, 131–133).

The concluding moral of *Aviezer Haro’eh* (Aviezer the Seer) also addressed the reader directly in second person: „Before you know what is on earth, don’t lift your eyes to the stars, don’t look to the sky“ (IV, 175–176). Another approach, used by Ben Zeev, addressed the reader in an intimate, advising tone, resorting to the familiar biblical style of wisdom proverbs: „My son! As you gain in knowledge and wisdom, beware not to boast about them“ (IV, 224–245). Thus, the Hebrew fabulist was applying a proverbial technique which was based on the classical Hebraic sources to his fable.

The language of the fables in general is biblical Hebrew. It is rich in allusions and includes biblical references. Grammatically, the fabulist used Vav Hahipuch (Vav conversive), characteristic of biblical Hebrew. Similarly, he employed biblical literary conventions to denote the transition of time and the beginning of a new event, such as „*Vayehi achar hadevarim ha’eleh*“ („and it came to pass“) (III, 9). To re-create the authentic atmosphere of ancient times the fabulist used a paraphrase of common biblical locution, „*Ish hayah be’eretz kedem, Aviezer shemo*“ (There was a man in an eastern [or: ancient] land. Aviezer was his name) (IV, 175). The use of the biblical style of Hebrew establishes a strong cultural connection to

classical Hebrew literature, and sets the maskilic fable as an inherent Hebrew genre with distinct Hebraic characteristics, which were familiar to the maskilic reader.

Based on the above observations, it appears that previous assessments that stressed the foreign influence on the maskilic fable were exaggerated.⁸² It is noted that while there have been external influences on the Hebrew fable of Haskalah, there was no less an influence from internal sources. The Hebrew fabulists drew from the Hebrew corpus, and when relying on the European fables, the Maskilim were adapting them and making them look as though they were of Hebrew origin.

Finally, an attempt will be made to offer a partial and cursory reply to the question whether the fable served as a substitute to satire in early Haskalah in Germany. Among the 55 fables published in *Hame'asef*, only nine may be considered as satiric or as aiming for direct criticism. Only a few of these were directly relevant to Hebrew Haskalah in its drive to change Jewish society and to reform Jewish culture, assisting to promote and disseminate Haskalah ideology. However, if the criterion for establishing the satiric role of the fable is the certainty that these fables were written or published for a satiric purpose, aiming at a timely target, then the number of fables identified as satire probably will be even less. It should be noted, though, that satiric works were published in *Hame'asef* in disregard of Wessely's recommendation to the founding editors.⁸³

Obviously, fables tend to lose their timely meaning and temporal goal. Today it is difficult, if not impossible, to reconstruct the background of many classical fables. In time, they have lost their relevance, timeliness, local coloring, and immediate meaning, and have assumed a transcendental, timeless, and universal air in their current form. The same thing could have happened, perhaps, to some of the Haskalah fables, whose relevant criticism and particular message now escape the modern reader, who can only attempt to reconstruct it. Instead, these fables are read as transcending their time and place – as any other good fables – for eternity.

Anmerkungen

- 1 Lachover: 1963, p. 79: „It [the fable] served also in lieu of satire.“
- 2 *Nachal Habesor* [The River Besor, or, Good Tidings], bound with *Hame'asef*, I (1783/4), p. 8; Klausner: 1960, p. 152.
- 3 See Pelli: 1988, pp. 48, 70. Shaanan, too, is of the same view, and he related
- 4 the alleged lack of satire to the Maskilim's proclivity toward the satiric fable. See Shaanan: 1962, pp. 69–70. Klausner: 1960, pp. 158–159, 161–162 (on the fables in *Hame'asef*), pp. 169–170 (on Satanow's *Mishlei Asaf*), p. 184 (citing Juda Leib Ben Zeev's fables).

- 5 Shapira: 1967, pp. 333–343; on the general fable, pp. 309–310; on Satanow's epigrammatic and proverbial work, pp. 313–333. Shapira cited Brill's concept of the fable (see below) arguing, based on Lachover's conclusion, that Brill followed Lessing's fable theories (p. 313).
- 6 Halkin: 1978, pp. 61, 81–93. See especially p. 82.
- 7 Shaanan: 1962, pp. 69–75, and see p. 42.
- 8 Werses taught a course on the fable at the Hebrew University and published his anthology *Hamashal Veha'alegoriah Besifrut Hahaskalah* [The Fable and Allegory in Haskalah Literature, Jerusalem, 1965]. He discussed Satanow's proverbs in *Mishlei Asaf* in his article *Al Yitzchak Satanow Vechiburo 'Mishlei Asaf'* [On Isaac Satanow and his Composition 'Mishlei Asaf'], which was republished in his book, *Megamot Vetzurot Besifrut Hahaskalah* [Tendencies and Forms in Haskalah Literature]: 1990, pp. 162–186, especially pp. 384 (in the article) and 178 (in the book).
- 9 Friedlander: 1970, pp. 56–58.
- 10 Shavit: 1987, p. 41, citing Satanow's *Mishlei Asaf*.
- 11 Tsamriyon: 1988, pp. 107–110, 131–132.
- 12 Shavit: 1988, pp. 385–415. See her article *Harihut Shel Chadar Hahaskalah Hayehudit Beberlin* [The Furniture of Jewish Haskalah's 'Cheder' in Berlin]: 1993, pp. 193–207.
- 13 Ofek: 1979, p. 54.
- 14 Toury: 1992, p. 75–86.
- 15 See, for example, J. L. Gordon's introduction to his *Mishlei Yehudah* [Fables of Judah], where he reviewed briefly the history of the fable in Hebrew and in world literatures and added his notes on the nature of the fable: 1860, pp. 175–179.
- 16 See, for example, Stern: 1981, pp. 261–277.
- 17 Reference is made to those fables that were first published in *Hame'asef* and then republished – or modified for publication – in a reader. Previously, I have published several articles on the fable, which were included as chapters on the fable in my two books: 1999, chap. 5; and 2001, chap. 3.
- 18 Noel: 1975, pp. 149–151; Emmerich: 1960, p. 5.
- 19 See *The Spectator*, No. 183 (1711), republished in: Bond: 1965, p. 219.
- 20 Noel: 1975, p. 151.
- 21 Noel: 1975, p. 6.
- 22 Noel: 1975, p. 10, and see also Gellert: 1966, p. 37. This edition is based of Gellert's first Latin edition that was published in 1774 and in German in 1743. See below citation of Gellert and his works in *Hame'asef*.
- 23 Dryden: 1967, pp. 471–493; Gay: 1737, pp. B–B3 (6 pages); Edison published his essay on the fable in *Spectator* No. 183 in 1711 (see note 19, above); Dodsley: 1965, pp. lvii–lxxvii (facsimile edition); Russell: 1772. On Gellert's work, see his book cited in note 22; on Lessing's work, see in notes 32, 35, 49; Beattie: 1971, pp. 505–574; Goldsmith: 1879, pp. xxxvii–xl.
- 24 See Noel: 1975, p. 23, citing Pierre Bayle's *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique* (1697).
- 25 Blackham: 1985, p. 258, note 3. See various other definitions and uses in Smith: 1915, p. 519.
- 26 Dryden: 1967, p. 472: „Fables Ancient and Modern; Translated into Verse, from Homer, Ovid, Boccace, &

- Chaucer; with Original Poems, by M. Dryden."
- 27 See Noel: 1975, p. 23.
- 28 Home/Kames: *Elements of Criticism* (1762), III, pp. 221–222.
- 29 A whole chapter in his book is devoted to the fable; see Gottsched: 1962, p. 161, 445–449. See discussion about him in Noel: 1975, pp. 48–49.
- 30 See Gellert: 1986. The first part of his fables were published in 1746 and the second part in 1748.
- 31 Gellert: 1966, p. 11, 17, 31, 33, 35, 57. Discussion herewith is based on Noel: 1975, pp. 66–73.
- 32 Lessing: 1988(b), p. 85–157. See Noel: 1975, pp. 85–101.
- 33 Lessing: 1988 (a), p. 221–223; Noel: 1975, p. 94.
- 34 Lessing: 1988(a), p. 165.
- 35 Lessing: 1988 (a), p. 164–231, especially p. 204. See Noel: 1975, pp. 85–101, and Blackham: 1985, p. 102.
- 36 Lessing: 1988(a), p. 195, translation according to Noel: 1975, p. 91.
- 37 Such as the writings of Herder and Lowth. See, for example, Herder: 1890.
- 38 L - - e, in the section *Review of New Books, Hame'asef*, V, 1789, pp. 282–284. Brill used several acronyms with different punctuations for his articles and fables, such as L - - e, J...I, and J - I, cited below. They are cited here as originally printed.
- 39 *Hame'asef*, V, 1789, pp. 282–284. Translated from the Hebrew. See Lessing's definition next to endnote 36 and its reference in that note.
- 40 See, for example, *Hame'asef*, I, 1783/4, p. 4.
- 41 See, for example, Cenaani: 1969, p. 3399, under „*Mashal*." See Smith's article, where he cites this fact, Smith: 1915, p. 519. W. Russell's book of Fables was entitled *Fables Moral and Sentimental*, and was published in London in 1771; Johan de Witt's fables, purportedly translated from the Dutch, were published in London in 1703 under the title *Fables Moral and Political*, see Noel: 1975, p. 29; also: Antoine Furetière's collection of fables entitled *Fables morales et nouvelles*, published in Paris in 1671; see Noel: 1975, pp. 17, 161. The term „*Mishlei Musar*“ apparently did not appear prior to Haskalah.
- 42 J...I, *Mishlei Musar* [-] Petichah [Moral Fables – An Introduction], *Hame'asef*, I, 1783/4, pp. 88–89. The inclusion of fables in prose within the section of poetry will be discussed below.
- 43 „I did not intend to explain the total matter of the fable based on the art of beauty (aesthetic),“ he wrote. It is worthwhile to note that Brill cited the accepted distinction between the biblical fable that is known in the aesthetic of the genre as „*fabula*“ and the Aesopian fable known and identified as „*fable*.“ See *Mishlei Musar* [-] Petichah, *Hame'asef*, I, 1784, pp. 88–89.
- 44 See, for example, Naphtali Herz Wessely's statement on this topic in his *Divrei Shalom Ve'emet* [Words of Peace and Truth]: 1782, p. 29, and my article on the *melitzah*, the highly florid use of Hebrew, Pelli: 1991, p. 39.
- 45 *Mishlei Musar* [-] Petichah, *Hame'asef*, I, 1784, p. 89.
- 46 Brill writes: „The effect of these fables on the listener is a personal process, while the personal aspect of it does not touch the individual himself, and thus does not prevent him from accepting

- it.“ (Mishlei Musar [–] Petichah, *Hame’asef*, I, 1784, p. 89).
- 47 Brill: 1791, pp. 6–7, where he discussed aspects of poetry, and the definition of the fable and its kinds. This introduction is not found in the first edition of the book published in Berlin in 1785.
- 48 Brill: 1791, pp. 6–7.
- 49 Lessing: 1988(c), p. 204.
- 50 Gellert: 1966, p. 37, as discussed above. Yet the notion that one is inclined to accept a moral lesson when related to an animal more than in a human context may be traced to Antoine Furetière, a student of La Fontaine; see Noel: 1975, p. 17.
- 51 Lessing: 1988(c), p. 204. See discussion on Lessing above.
- 52 Lessing: 1988(c), p. 204; Brill: 1791, pp. 6–7. According to Lessing, a complex fable is a one that contains an allegorical element. Whereas, in Brill’s perception, a complex fable contains a number of elements of which allegory is but one.
- 53 Brill: 1791, p. 7a.
- 54 Satanow: 1775, in the introduction.
- 55 Satanow: 1775, p. 100b; see also p. 7a.
- 56 Satanow: 1775, pp. 20–23.
- 57 Euchel: 1790, p. 5 (my pagination).
- 58 Hacothen: 1799, pp. 1–2 (my pagination).
- 59 See, for example, Toury: 1992, p. 77.
- 60 Hacothen: 1810, pp. 75–80. See especially p. 77. I used the edition of Moshe Chayim Luzzatto: 1810, introduction of the publisher, pp. 1–15. The publisher, Dov Ginzburg, dealt with the classification of poetry while Moshe Chayim Luzzatto discussed *melitzah* and rhetorics. See David: 1978.
- 61 Ginzburg’s Introduction, Luzzatto: 1810, p. 3, opposing Brill: 1791, p. 7a. Brill, however, classified Jotham’s fable as „parable or allegory.“
- 62 Ben Zeev: 1811, p. 3 (my pagination).
- 63 See Pelli: 2000.
- 64 Juda Jeteles republished the fables of his brother, Baruch Jeteles, previously published in *Hame’asef*; Jeteles: 1821.
- 65 Perry: 1980, p. ix.
- 66 *Hame’asef*, I, 1784, p. 132.
- 67 Wolfssohn: 1806, p. 32b.
- 68 *Hame’asef*, I, 1784, pp. 132–133.
- 69 His signature, M. M., is identified by Lachover as Moses Mendelssohn’s; I disagree with this identification, see Pelli: 1972, pp. 101–103.
- 70 Pagination in parentheses in the text refers to the source discussed in this context, and cited in a closeby endnote, or to *Hame’asef*, by volume and page numbers, when citing the fables.
- 71 J...I [Joel Brill], *Mishlei Musar* [–] Petichah, *Hame’asef*, I, 1783/4, pp. 88–89.
- 72 See Blackham: 1985, p. 11.
- 73 Hanakdan: 1921, pp. 61–62; Hanakdan: 1946, p. 61; see the English rendering in: *The Complete Fables*: 1998, fable 73, p. 58; see also, Richardson: 1975, fable 169, pp. 132–133.
- 74 *The Complete Fables*: 1988, p. 58. See another version of the moral: Richardson: 1975, p. 133: „Mildness and persuasion win upon ingenuous minds sooner than a blustering [?] and bullying behaviour.“
- 75 Letteris: 1862, p. 151.
- 76 *The Complete Fables*: 1988, p. 80.
- 77 Wolfssohn: 1806, pp. 32b–33a.
- 78 Based on I Kings 21,1, Isaiah 5,, Song of Songs 8,11.

- 79 See Perry: 1940, pp. 391–419; also Perry: 1990, pp. xiv–xv.
- 80 „Wine and sleep for the wicked bring enjoyment both for them and for the world.“
- 81 On the exemplum, see Mosher: 1911. On the Hebrew exempla, Yasif: 1994, pp. 310–324; a version of it published previously in *Tarbitz*, 57, 1988, pp. 217–255.
- 82 See endnote 59 and related text.
- 83 See endnote 2 and related text. See Pelli: 1999, chaps. 1 and 2, on Euchel and Wolfssohn’s satires, respectively, published in *Hame’asef*.