Moshe Pelli

"These are the words of the great pundit, scholar and poet Herder...": Herder and the Hebrew Haskalah

"These are the words of the great 'Chacham' [pundit], scholar and poet Herder..." – thus wrote in 1790 Isaac Euchel, the editor of *Hame'asef*, which was the first journal of Hebrew Haskalah in Germany, in a programmatic review article on Naphtali Hertz Wessely's biblical epos *Shirei Tiferet* (Songs of Glory).

From this quotation by such a central figure in early Haskalah – and some other references that will be discussed later – we may assume that Herder was well respected among the Maskilim (Hebrew Enlighteners) and the Haskalah community, and that his writings and thought on biblical poetry and aesthetics were known to the Maskilim, and well received by them.

Nevertheless, intriguingly, we cannot find any translation of Herder's original works, for example, in *Hame'asef* (published from 1783 to 1811). More puzzling perhaps is that, despite the laudatory expressions, we notice some ambiguity in the attitude of some Maskilim toward the German writer.

This ambivalence prompted me to study the acceptance of Herder, especially his poetics of the Hebrew Bible – excluding, for this paper, his philosophy and theory of history – by the early Hebrew Haskalah in Germany at the end of the 18th century. I will also allude to the acceptance of Herder in Austrian Haskalah in the beginning of the 19th century. In this paper I will examine original Hebrew Haskalah texts with references to Herder and his work, in context, and will attempt to shed some light on Herder's influence on and his acceptance among the early Maskilim.

I. Translation of Contemporary German Writers in Hame'asef

The question of translations from contemporary literature in *Hame'asef* was discussed by the historian of Hebrew literature, Joseph Klausner. He addressed the question, why didn't the editors of *Hame'asef* publish any of the great German

1 Klausner, Joseph: Historiah Shel Hasifrut Ha'ivrit Haḥadashah [History of Modern Hebrew Literature], I, Jerusalem 1960, p. 155. Contrary to Klausner, some of Lessing's epigrams were published in translation in "Hame'asef". See Pelli, Moshe: Sha'ar Lahaskalah [Gate to Haskalah], Annotated Index of Hame'asef, First Modern Periodical in Hebrew (1783–1811), Jerusalem 2000, p. 114.

writers of their time, such as Lessing, Herder, Kant, Schiller and Goethe.[1] Klausner argues that the editors faced major obstacles which they could not overcome. Firstly, they could not bridge the gap that existed between European Enlightenment and the political and cultural condition of the Jews at that time. Secondly, their use of the Hebrew language, the 'holy tongue', hindered adequate translation from German. Consequently, he asserts, the tantalizing polarity between the old and the new, as epitomized in the renewal of the Hebrew language, defused their creative energies.

However, Klausner's explanation, while contributing important insights to the understanding of Haskalah literature, is not satisfactory. Klausner does not give any explanation about the abundance of *other* translations in *Hame'asef*. As my Index to the journal has shown,[2] the editors of *Hame'asef* did publish over 30 different translations and adaptations by such German writers as Blumauer, Bürger, Dusch, Gellert, Gessner, Hagedorn, Haller, Ewald Christian Kleist, Lessing, and Ramler, among others.[3]

In addition, the editors also published several translations and adaptations from other European languages, such as translation from the Italian poet and dramatist Metastasio and from the English poets John Gay and Oliver Goldsmith.[4]

The enigma is multiplied if we accept the views of one of the students of Haskalah and *Aufklärung*, Ḥayim Shoham, on German Haskalah as attempting to model the emerging Hebrew literature on German literature and accomplishing this goal by translating German works into Hebrew.[5]

To solve this question, we need to check which non-Hebraic writers the editors of *Hame'asef did* publish in translation. It seems that all these non-Hebraic writers were, in the main, *not* contemporaries of *Hame'asef's* writers and editors but represented an earlier generation.[6] Furthermore, these were established and recognized writers, and most of them were already part of the German literary canon.

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2 See relevant entries under the authors' names and under translations from German, French, Italian, etc., in Pelli: Sha'ar Lahaskalah [note 1]. The figure 30 translations includes only "belles lettres".

3 Alois Blumauer (1755–1798), Gottfried August Bürger (1747–1794), Johann Jakob Dusch (1725–1787), Christian Fürchtegott Gellert (1715–1769), Salomon Gessner (1730–1788), Friedrich von Hagedorn (1708–1754), Albrecht von Haller (1708–1777), Ewald Christian von Kleist (1715–1759), Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–1781), Karl Wilhelm Ramler (1725–1798). See also note 8 below.

4 Pietro Metastasio (1698–1782), John Gay (1685–1732) and Oliver Goldsmith (1730–1774).

5 Shoham, Chayim: Betzel Haskalat Berlin [Under the Shadow of the Berlin Enlightenment], Israel 1996, chap. 3. See also Shoham, Ḥayim: 'Nathan Heḥacham' Ben Bnei Mino ['Nathan the Wise' Among His Kind], Tel Aviv 1981, section II.

6 See their dates in notes 3 and 4, above.

An insight into this concept and its support is found in a literary review by Joel Brill (L – – e, Löwe), a prolific Maskil and a future editor of *Hame'asef*, on a book by Hirsch Derenburg, *Yoshvei Tevel* (Inhabitants of the World), in *Hame'asef*, in 1789.[7] In a harsh criticism against the reviewed writer, Brill lists great German writers who, to him, are exemplary in their writings, unlike the Hebrew writer under review. They are Gellert, Rabener, Hagedorn, Lichtwer, Lessing, Wieland, Gessner, Weisse, Kleist, Ramler, and some others.[8] This list supports our contention of the selective translation by the editors of *Hame'asef*.

In other words, the editors of *Hame'asef* maintained an editorial literary policy to publish only works that were already part of the accepted corpus of the recent 'classical' German literature. One may disagree with their policy; however, it cannot be dismissed as a careless disregard for contemporary literature. I think that this may be accepted as an interim explanation for the non-inclusion of translations by contemporary writers, such as Herder, the topic of our discussion. Thus, it is not that the Maskilim were not able to solve translation obstacles and others, as suggested by Klausner. Similar criticism that the editors of *Hame'asef* were not keeping pace with contemporary German literature, that was waged by Gilon (in his work on Mendelssohn's *Kohelet Musar*),[9] should likewise be dismissed.

Gideon Toury, an expert of translation, in his work on the maskilic fable and Gellert, explains the Maskilim's proclivity toward non-contemporary translations in the fact that at the emergence of Haskalah, "German *Aufklärung* was at its summit, and it is difficult to imagine a real synchronization between the two."[10] This may explain why the editors of *Hame'asef* turned to writers that were accepted in the canon.

However, references to some of the great contemporary minds in German letters were definitely part of the published material in early Hebrew Haskalah literature. I shall discuss some references to Herder in Hebrew and attempt to analyze and explain their use in context of the emerging Haskalah literature.

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7 L – – e [Joel Löwe, Brill], Review of Hirsch Dernburg's "Yoshvei Tevel" [Inhabitants of the World], Hame'asef, V (1789), p. 283. The book was published in 1789.

8 Christian Füchtegott Gellert, Gottlieb Wilhelm Rabener (1714–1771), Hagedorn, Magnus Gottfried Lichtwer (1719–1783), Lessing, Christoph Martin Wieland (1733–1813), Gessner, Christian Felix Weisse (1726–1804), Kleist, Ramler. Full names and dates added to those not listed above in note 3 and 4.

9 Gilon, Meir: Kohelet Musar Lemoshe Mendelssohn Al Reka Tekufato [Moses Mendelssohn's Kohelet Musar Against the Background of Its Period], Jerusalem 1979, pp. 147–148: "Compared to 'Kohelet Musar', 'Hame'asef' was an anachronistic phenomenon" (from a literary point of view).

10 Toury, Gideon: "Shimush Muskal Bemashal Maskili [:] Christian F. Gellert Basifrut Hai'vrit" [A Logical Use of a Maskilic Fable [:] C. F. Gellert in Hebrew Literature], Nekudot Mifneh Basifrut Ha'ivrit Vezikatan Lamaga'im Im Sifruyot Aḥerot [Turning Points in Hebrew Literature and Their Relation to Contacts with Other Literatures], Tel Aviv 1992, p. 75–86.

II. Euchel Attributing Wessely's Book to Herder's Encouragement and Influence

In Euchel's review, which I mentioned before, he praises Wessely as the Hebrew poet *par excellence*, referring to his book as "this exalted work the likeness of which has not been done since Israel has been exiled from its land."[11] While considering Wessely's biblical epos a major achievement in Hebrew letters, Euchel is anxious to show its relations to the creative trends of German literature. He does so by attributing the motive that prompted Wessely to write *Shirei Tiferet* to Herder. However, Euchel does not spell out Herder's name in the text of the article, saying only that it was "one great person of Germany's pundits for some time, who has [expressed his] hope to see a poem on the acts of Moses and the story of the Exodus [written] by a Hebrew writer."[12]

The identity of this German pundit is revealed in a long and prominently displayed footnote appended to his article, as Euchel writes, "These are the words of the great "Chacham," scholar and poet Herder in his great book *Vom Geist der ebräischen Poesie,* part two, p. 78, which I shall present to you herewith in his own words, as follows." Euchel goes on to quote extensively from Herder's book (using, as was the practice, German in Hebrew characters)[13]:

> "Mich wunderts, daß wir bei so manchen Ebräischen Heldengedichten unserer Sprache noch keine Epopee über Moses haben. [...] Doch möchte ich mit dieser kleinen Exposition keinen Deutschen, sondern einen Deutschen Ebräer geweckt haben! Ihm ist der Gegenstand national: seine unbefangenere, frühere Bekanntschaft mit den Dichtern seiner Nation müßte ihm eine ältere Naivetät geben, als man von einem Deutschen Gelehrten fordern könnte."[14]

According to Euchel's assertion, Herder's stated wish that a Hebrew writer compose an epos on Moses seems to have served as a stimulus that spurred Wessely to write his biblical epic. Thus, the signal given by such a prominent German writer and scholar ostensibly has had a seminal effect on Wessely, which Euchel is very pleased to report. To Euchel, this influence indicates a quintessential connection between

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11 A. A. [Isaac Euchel]: "[Bikoret Sefer Shirei Tiferet]" [Review of the Book 'Shirei Tiferet,'" Hame'asef, VI (1790), p. 211.

12 A. A. [Isaac Euchel]: "Hemshech Bikoret Sefer Shirei Tiferet" [Continuation of Review of the Book 'Shirei Tiferet,'" Hame'asef, VI (1790), p. 346.

13 Herder, Johann Gottfried: Werke in zehn Bänden, Frankfurt am Main 1985ff, V, pp. 1018f.

14 "It has been matter of wonder to me, that among so many heroick poems in our language on subjects of Hebrew history, we have yet none in which Moses is the hero.... Yet I would wish, by this brief exposition to excite to such an undertaking, not a German, but a German Hebrew. To him the subject is a national one. His more unbiassed and more early acquaintance with the poets of his nation, must give to the work more simplicity in his mind, than could be expected of a German scholar." Translation by James Marsh, in Herder, J. G.: The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry, II, Burlington 1833, pp. 60–61.

German literature and the newly emerging modern Hebrew literature. It implies that Haskalah received its cues from its German counterpart. Accordingly, Wessely's creative work followed the dictates of Haskalah ideology, namely, establishing the up-and-coming Hebrew literature on a par with modern European literatures.

Thus, Euchel started the trend among Maskilim and latter-day scholars of Haskalah that attributed Wessely's writing of *Shirei Tiferet* to Herder.[15]

This concept was not universally accepted by Haskalah scholars. Noah Rosenblum, for one, in his book on Wessely's *Shirei Tiferet*, dismisses the assertion about Wessely's indebtedness to Herder and for that matter also to Klopstock and his *Messias*.[16]

As promoted by Euchel, this notion was picked up by Shalom Hacohen, who became the editor of *Hame'asef* (1809–1811), following in Euchel's footsteps, and was a poet on his own right, going in Wessely's footsteps. In the German introduction to his biblical epos *Mata'ei Kedem Al Admat Tzafon* (Oriental Plantations in a Northern Land), which centers on the stories of Abraham and David, he bemoans the passing of Lowth and Herder and finally of Wessely, who improved on what the first two did. Hacohen relates Herder and Wessely as "the intimately acquainted friends of our oriental poetical art."[17] There is no doubt that the second generation of Maskilim, exemplified by Shalom Hacohen, did consider Herder's work on biblical poetry as seminal to the growth of the literature of Haskalah. And indeed it was Shalom Hacohen who wrote biblical epics, continuing in Wessely's style.

It should be noted that while Euchel is thrilled to report on Herder's seminal influence on Wessely, there are other contemporary reports that attribute Wessely's incentive to an internal source.[18] Wessely's first biographer, David Friedrichsfeld, did not share Euchel's notion, claiming in effect that it was Wessely's participation in the *Be'ur* project, the commentary to and translation of the Pentateuch into German in Hebrew characters, initiated and led by Mendelssohn, that gave him – Wessely – the impetus to write *Shirei Tiferet*.[19]

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15 For example, Klausner: Historiah Shel Hasifrut Ha'ivrit Haḥadashah [note 1], I, p. 30.

16 Rosenbloom, Noah H.: Ha'epos Hamikra'i Me'idan Hahaskalah Vehaparshanut [The Exodus Epic of the Enlightenment and Exegesis], Israel 1983, pp. 10–11, 14, 24. Rosenbloom reviews the critical literature on this topic citing several critics.

17 Hacohen, Shalom: "Vorrede", Mata'ei Kedem Al Admat Tzafon [Oriental Plantations in A Northern Land], Roedelhein 1807, p. iii: "Mit dem Tode Herders und Wessely's, dieser zwei trautesten Fruende unserer orientalischen Dichtkunst...."

18 Klausner: Historiah Shel Hasifrut Ha'ivrit Haḥadashah [note 1], I, pp. 136–138, reports on the customary Herder source (citing also Meisl and Greatz) as well as internal sources (citing Friedrichsfeld (see note 19).

19 Friedrichsfeld, David: Zecher Tzadik [Memory of A Righteous Person], Amsterdam 1809, p. 44.

Importantly, Wessely himself has a different, and quite an original, explanation for writing his book. He claimed that in writing the biblical epic he was going in the footsteps of past Jewish scholars, who interpreted the Hebrew Bible using poetry as a medium.[20] Thus, he did not consider himself a poet but an exegete, a commentator, when he wrote his biblical epic. One can understand Wessely's position from his perspective, being one of the most conservative and most traditionally observant, yet modern, among the Maskilim. Moreover, his treatment of the biblical stories in his epos is strictly traditional and is based on Jewish classical sources, and bears no influence of external German writers such as Herder.

III. Mendelssohn's Reference to Herder in His Be'ur

In this context it will be worthwhile to make some brief remarks regarding Mendelssohn and Herder that have some bearing in our discussion. As is well known, Mendelssohn did not see eye to eye with Herder on the concept of language, and a discussion of his attitude toward Herder and the relations between them transcends the boundaries of this article.

It is a well-established notion that Mendelssohn has had a seminal influence on Hebrew Haskalah. If we were to select one major literary enterprise that he has initiated and headed, which dominated the Haskalah scene and has had a major impact on the creative thinking and the literary energies of many of the Maskilim, it would be Mendelssohn's project of the *Be'ur*. The *Be'ur* epitomized the very essence of Haskalah ideology and *Geist*. It exemplified Haskalah's desire to return to the Hebrew Bible (as opposed to the halachic rabbinical writings) and to biblical Hebrew as a mode of expression, and to identify and exhibit the beauty found in the Hebrew Bible.

Haskalah literature and its leading proponents were searching for paradigms and models to adopt and emulate in an effort to define its literary orientation and to establish its poetics. They found a fertile ground in Mendelssohn's *Be'ur*.

The Maskilim were aware that in his introduction to the *Be'ur*, Mendelssohn was very careful not to cite any non-Jewish references.[21] Thus, it is understandable that there is no reference to Herder in the introduction.

What is perhaps less known is that Mendelssohn did refer to Herder, without mentioning his name, in his commentary to Genesis 4:25, saying that "an author

20 Wessely, Naphtali Hertz: "Petiḥat Hameshorer" [Poet's Introduction], Shirei Tiferet [Songs of Glory], Berlin 1789, pp. 10–11 (my pagination).

21 Moshe ben Menaḥem [Mendelssohn]: Or Linetivah [Light for Its Path], Berlin 1783, where the introduction was published separately. It was also published in the book of Genesis, see next note.

who is not one of our people" suggested a nice solution to the understanding of the text. This anonymous reference was identified as referring to Herder.[22] So, Mendelssohn was open to accept Herder's views in relations to the Hebrew Scriptures.

Another possible source of Mendelssohn's connection to Herder may be found in the introduction to the Song of Moses in Exodus, where Mendelssohn expounded on the quality and beauty of biblical poetry and thus may have manifested some agreement between these two pundits.[23] In it, Mendelssohn states that biblical poetry is much superior to any secular poetry – even to the best of poetry – in form, structure, splendor and beauty (Exodus, p. 66b). In analyzing biblical poetry, Mendelssohn shows the potential of the Hebrew language as a language of exalted creativity, a language of the sublime.

Even though Mendelssohn and Herder disagreed on the nature of language, both thought highly of biblical Hebrew and it may appear as though Mendelssohn's cited quotation would support – and did support – Herder's general appreciation of Hebrew language and biblical poetry.

The problem with Herder's views is that he was rather ambiguous about the divine origins of the Hebrew language, expressing different views in different books. He rejected the notion of the divine origins of poetry in his early work in opposition to Hamann and the prevailing traditional notion. Subsequently, he rejected the divine origins of language (in his essay on the origins of language), only to reverse his position and to accept the notion of the divine origins of poetry (in *Älteste Urkunde des Menschengeschlechts,* in 1774), and consequently of language, and then, again, to take an ambiguous stand in *Vom Geist der hebräischen Poesie* in 1782/3.[24]

Herder's ambiguity notwithstanding, it should be pointed out that this similar appreciation for the biblical language and poetry on the part of both writers should not be construed as a conclusive proof of Herder's influence, for Mendelssohn most probably relied on intrinsic Jewish sources for such a notion. The widely

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22 Moshe ben Menaḥem [Mendelssohn]: Sefer Netivot Hashalom [Book of Path of Peace], "Bereshit" [Genesis], Berlin 1783, 4:25, p. 23b. See Sandler, Peretz: Habe'ur Latorah [Mendelssohn's Edition of the Pentateuch], Jerusalem 1941, p. 103. M. Z. Segal identified the reference to Herder in his article "Leḥeker Tzuratah Shel Hashirah Hamikra'it" [Probe into the Form of Biblical Poetry], Sefer Klausner [Klausner Festschrift], Tel Aviv 1937, p. 99, n. 34, where he also discusses Mendelssohn's indebtedness to Lowth.

23 Moshe ben Menaḥem [Mendelssohn]: Sefer Netivot Hashalom [Book of Path of Peace], "Shmot" [Exodus], Berlin 1783, pp. 52a–56b.

24 See discussion in Scwarcz, Moshe: Safah, Mytos, Omanut [Language, Myth, Art], Tel Aviv 1967, pp. 54–79; Levi, Zeev: Hayahadut Bitmunat Olamam Shel Hamann, Herder veGoethe [Judaism in the Worldview of J. G. Hamman, J. G. Herder and W. v. Goethe], Jerusalem 1995, chap. II, pp. 99–137, especially p. 117. See also, Herder: Werke [note 13], V, p. 988.

known source is, of course, Yehuda Halevi's *Hakuzari,* which states the original qualities that prevailed in early Hebrew language.[25]

Because of the ambiguity in Herder's position on biblical language and poetry, it is likely that the Maskilim read in Herder what they wanted to read and disregarded that which was contrary to their concept of Hebrew and poetry.

Case in point is the following use of a citation from Herder:

IV. Herder's Influence in Biblical Poetry: Review Article on Shir Hashirim Published in Hame'asef

Reference to Herder may be found more often than not in context of discussions on biblical poetry. One such significant reference to Herder is included in a review article on the publication of the new edition of *Shir Hashirim* (Song of Songs). It was Mendelssohn's translation into German (in Hebrew characters), which was published after his death in 1788 by the Maskilim's publishing house with commentary by Aaron Wolfssohn and Joel Brill.[26]

The article, by D – S (David Schlesinger), was published in 1790 in *Hame'asef.*[27]

The reviewer attempts to justify relying on non-Judaic sources in biblical scholarship, which was indeed quite a new and daring step by the Maskilim. In as much as they wanted to relate their intellectual and literary activities to those of the German *Aufklärung,* they had to be very careful with material related to Judaism and especially to the Hebrew Bible. The Maskilim could not afford to antagonize the more moderate followers of Haskalah by relying on external, non-Jewish treatment of the Hebrew Bible. To make sure that the moderate Maskilim would not reject Haskalah writings or even ban such biblical endeavor as the *Be'ur,* the Maskilim's treatment of non-Jewish sources of biblical scholarship was a very cautious one.

Understandably, this reviewer endeavors to justify the use of external sources by relying on a precedent of a great authority in Judaism. And who else but

25 Halevi, Yehuda: Hakuzari, Satanow's edition, Berlin 1795, p. 30b, article II (item 35): The "Ḥaver" [Jewish scholar] says that Hebrew is superior to other languages, is the most important of all languages, and is the language that God spoke with Adam and Eve. Mendelssohn expresses the superiority of Hebrew in other writings; see, for example, his "Leshon Hazahav" [Golden Language], Berlin 1783, on the cover.

26 Megilat Shir Hashirim [Scroll of Song of Songs], translated by Moshe ben Menaḥem [Mendelssohn] with commentary by Aaron Wolfssohn and Joel Brill, Berlin 1788.

27 D – S, Review article on the publication of a new edition of Shir Hashirim (Song of Songs), published in "Hame'asef", VI (1790), pp. 57–61, 87–96. D – S is identified by Steinschneider, M.: Catalogus Librorum in Bibliotheca Bodleiana, I, Berlin 1852–1860, Facsimile ed.: Berlin 1931, Hildesheim 1964), p. 577, as David Schlesinger.

Mendelssohn could serve such an authority. So the reviewer cites from Mendelssohn's introduction to his edition of Kohelet (Ecclesiastes). Eagerly, he shows that Mendelssohn did not hesitate to examine non-Jewish commentaries and used them if they were "truthful" (*Hame'asef*, VI, p. 57).[28]

It should also be noted at this point that Mendelssohn himself had stated that one of the goals of the new *Be'ur*, and especially of his translation into German, was to present a Jewish-orientated translation. Mendelssohn intended the *Be'ur* to counteract non-Jewish translations that were contrary to Jewish tradition, some of which were biased toward Judaism.[29]

Having such a prooftext, the reviewer then throws in a literary bombshell, stating that "truly, the bases of the translation of this scroll [Shir Hashîrim] are founded on the foundations of another precious and respectable translation, which came out of the mouth of Heḥacham Ha'adon Herder [the pundit Herr Herder]." In a footnote he cites Herder's translation of Song of Songs, *Lieder der Liebe*, published in 1781 (I have used the 1778 edition). The reviewer has high praise for Herder, who "achieved splendor and glory in this instructive [לימודי] matter in his delightful book, which he had published, that discusses the topic of poetry in the Hebrew language. For there he proved his might and strength in the ways of that language" (p. 58).[30] In a related footnote the reviewer cites the title of the Herder's other book, *Vom Geist der ebräischen Poesie* (the Leipzig, 1787 edition).

Now, this is a very interesting point, which, to my knowledge, is discussed in Hebrew Haskalah and in *Hame'asef* for the first time. It is important to note that the editors, Wolfssohn and Brill, do not mention in their introduction any ties to Herder's published translation nor is there any reference to Herder and his other works on biblical poetry.

The reviewer's allegation about Mendelssohn's indebtedness to Herder notwithstanding – a study of which exceeds the scope of this paper – his intention goes beyond this revelation. For, in effect, he wishes to point out that Mendelssohn 'did a better job' than Herder in his translation of Song of Songs.

So, while the reviewer gives proper credit to Herder whom he admires for sure, his praise for Mendelssohn is double-fold. According to his florid and figurative language, which is based on talmudic texts, "Heḥacham Ha'adon Herder plunged deep into mighty waters and brought up in his hand a good pearl [–] in his cited

28 [Mendelssohn, Moses], "Hakdamat Hamefaresh" [The Commentator's Introduction], Sefer Megilat Kohelet [The Book of the Scroll of Kohelet], Berlin 1770, at the end of the unpaginated introduction (p. 18, in my counting).

29 Or Linetivah [note 21], p. 50 (my pagination). This argument has been repeated by the Maskilim. See Pelli, Moshe: Moshe Mendelssohn: Bechavlei Masoret [M. M. Bonds of Tradition], Tel Aviv 1972, p. 70.

30 Paginaton in parentheses within the text refers to the source cited recently in this context (see note 27 above).

translation. However, our master Rambeman [R. Moshe ben Menaḥem] Z. L. [zichro livrachah – of blessed memory], went over [the text] in his mind's eyes and with the breadth of his understanding, and he cleansed and refined it, at times by changing words and at times by linking the rhetorics [Melitzah], sometimes he added to it and sometimes he subtracted from it[;] there was hardly one verse that he has not scrutinzed, so that this translation came out crystal-clear and very neat" (p. 58).

The reviewer then supports his contention by bringing four verses (6:8, 4:9, 7:9, 2:1) in the two versions of translation: namely, Herder's and Mendelssohn's, side by side. And concludes, "from all of this the reader may judge for himself about the work of our master Rambeman Z. L., and should see how he Z. L. sweetened the figurative expression [Melitzah] very much either by adding or subtracting a word, or by changing the order of the figurative language, according to his wise judgment and knowledge in these two languages, which are immense" (p. 61).

So, the reviewer's aim is to glorify Mendelssohn and his translation over Herder's while still showing great respect for the German writer.

To soften the 'sensational revelation' of Mendelssohn's indebtedness to Herder, the reviewer remarks in another footnote that the editors-publishers, Brill and Wolfssohn, themselves, have already expounded on the difference between the two translations in a German periodical, in 1789, showing the superiority of Mendelssohn's translation.[31]

The reviewer's position is typical of the Maskilim, who glorified Mendelssohn and deemed his work superior to anybody else's – superior even to such a great writer as Herder. Ostensibly, the editors of *Hame'asef* were pleased to print such a review.

V. Citing Herder's Work as Acceptable

As mentioned earlier, accepting non-Jewish writings as authoritative was advocated by the Maskilim. They aspired to show the compatibility of Judaism and Enlightenment and the need to broaden one's scope of knowledge to include secular disciplines. Ḥochmah, wisdom and secular disciplines, was promoted by the Maskilim regardless of whether it came from a Jewish source or not. "Accept the truth from whoever speaks it," was a motto adopted by Mendelssohn and the

31 Ibid., p. 61, citing an article in: Intelligenzblatt der allgemeinen Litteraturzeitung, published in 1789.

Maskilim, which is based on Maimonides.[32] According to the mindset of the Maskilim, secular studies may strengthen the very understanding of Judaism and support a person's faith.

This reviewer, D – S, dismisses the notion, expressed by some who, in his view, pretend to be pious, that wisdom and knowledge may be found only in Jewish writings and that anything else should be totally rejected as void and even as an abomination. There is no justification for such a notion – he argues – and true wisdom, coming out in non-Jewish writing may be acceptable so long as it does not contradict "our sacred religion" (p. 87). In so doing, he recommends that the reader follow in the footsteps of Moses Mendelssohn "to search and probe ... the truth."

Again, the reviewer relies of Mendelssohn to prove his point. Mendelssohn attempted to reconstruct the aesthetics of biblical poetry in his *Be'ur*, trying to approach it as literature, similar – yet much superior – to any contemporary European literature. According to Mendelssohn, the original biblical poetics was lost in time, as was the loss of the art of ancient Hebrew music. Now, it is up to the student of Hebrew Bible to reconstruct the lost poetics. In order to appreciate biblical poetry – he stressed – one must also have the knowledge of some contemporary European poetry.

The reviewer then concludes: "Therefore, how profitable and pleasant it should be if Jewish youths will be trained to study the books composed by scholars and men of fame in every generation, where these things are thoroughly explained, such as the book which I cited above" (p. 94). And he consequently cites Herder and his book on Hebrew poetry, and also Eichorn's introduction to the Bible.

Wolfssohn's Citation of Herder: Another reference to Herder's work is found in an article on a biblical theme in *Hame'asef* written by Aaron Wolfssohn, a biblical scholar and a future editor of the journal. In a study on the identity of "Bahamot" (in Job 40:15), Wolfssohn, without hesitation, approves the translation by the latest translators led by "Ha'adon Heḥacham Herder," citing his book on Hebrew

32 D – S, Review article, "Hame'asef", VI (1790), p. 57, citing Mendelssohn: "Hakdamat Hamefaresh," Sefer Megilat Kohelet [note 28], at the end of the unpaginated introduction (p. 18, in my counting): "Lekabel ha'emet mimi she'amaro" [to accept the truth from whoever speaks it]. This phrase has been repeated constantly by the Maskilim in support of their stand and ideology (for example, "Hame'asef", I (1783/84), p. 16; VII (1794–1797), pp. 28, 302). It is based on Maimonides, in his introduction to "Shemonah Perakim" [Eight Chapters], on "Pirkei Avot" [The Ethics of the Fathers], "The Eight Chapters of Maimonides on Ethics", Joseph I. Gorfinkle, ed., New York 1912, p. 6 ("Hakdamah" [Forward]), pp. 35–36 (in the English "Forward"): "As one should accept the truth from whatever source it proceeds."

poetry. Bahamot is identified as the Hippopotamus.[33] It should be noted that most reference to Herder call him "Heḥacham Ha'adon" or "Heḥacham" – honorific titles that express respect to – yet showing some distance from – this gentile writer.

VI. Brill's Citation of Herder in His Introduction to Psalms

It stands to reason that reference to Herder's work on Hebrew poetry may be found in the Maskilim's writings related to biblical commentary or translation of the Bible. And indeed we find references to Herder in the introduction to several biblical works by the Maskilim.

In his introduction to Psalms, Brill delineates his definition of poetry and his notion of Melitzah (rhetoric, aesthetics), stating that the definitions he presented are not his own, but he collected them from Jewish sources as well as from the books of gentile scholars ["ḥachmei ha'umot"] who wrote in this matter good and proper things."[34]

Upon discussing biblical parallelism, as part of his review of biblical rhetoric and figurative language, he praises "Ha'adon Heḥacham Herder" for his beautiful analogy, explaining this poetic phenomenon in the bible as "two twin brothers," citing Herder's book.[35]

He further refers to Herder's book, and highly recommends that the reader who wishes to read more about biblical rhetoric should go to Herder's book and there "he will find delicacies for his soul" (p. 10a). However, it should be pointed out that his biblical reliance of Herder does not preclude his resorting to other German writers, and Brill presents some definitions of the fable, which are based on Lessing.[36]

33 Halle [Wolfssohn], Aaron: "Hineh Na Bahamot" [Behold the Bahamot], (in the section devoted to: 'Be'ur Sifrei Kodesh') [Commentary on Scriptures], "Hame'asef", V (1789), pp. 291–293. Related to it is an article before this one where Wolfssohn discusses the Hippopotamus (pp. 289–291).

34 Brill, Joel: "Hakdamah Rishonah" [First Introduction], Sefer Zemirot Yisrael [The Book of the Songs of Israel], Sefer Tehilim [Pslams] with German translation by Moshe ben Menaḥem, and exegesis by Joel Brill, Berlin 1791, p. 3a.

35 Ibid., p. 7b, citing Herder: Werke [note 13], V, p. 29 (from an earlier edition).

36 Ibid., p. 7a. See my book "Sugot Vesugyot Besifrut Hahaskalah Ha'ivrit" [Kinds of Genre in Haskalah Literature: Types and Topics], Israel 1999, p. 126

VII. Ben Zeev's Introduction to the Hebrew Scriptures

On the other hand, the contemporary biblical scholar and Hebrew grammarian Juda Leib Ben Zeev, who wrote introductions to various books of the Bible early in the 19th century, exhibits a very cautious treatment of non-Jewish sources. In the general introduction to his *Mavo Lemikra'ei Kodesh* (Introduction to the Scriptures), published in 1810, he states his policy to rely on talmudic sages for their views on the Bible, "if their views agree with the straight-forward interpretation of the text ["peshat"], with straight reason [or common sense; "notim el sevarah hayesharah"], and do not contradict the clear truth."[37] While scholars asserted Eichorn's influence on Ben Zeev,[38] Ben Zeev himself does not cite any non-Jewish sources, let alone Herder. However, he cites plenty of Jewish sources, such as Maimonides, Nachmanides, David Kimḥi, and Abravanel, thus showing his professed commitment to traditional interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures. The closest Ben Zeev comes to citing a non-Jewish source is in the introduction to Ezra where he mentions Eusebius as source of information (74b). Also, in a small-type footnote in the introduction to the book of Jushua, he makes a comment about the lapse of time, referring to "the writers of the nations" ("sofrei ha'amim"), namely, non-Jewish sources, without mentioning any name.[39]

VIII. Shlomo Löwisohn's Melitzat Yeshurun and Its Relations to Herder

Another Maskil and biblical scholar who was active in the early 1800s, Shlomo Löwisohn, published his book on biblical rhetoric, *Melitzat Yeshurun* (The Rhetoric of Yeshurun), in 1816. It is one of the most comprehensive early books in Haskalah literature, which is devoted to biblical poetics. Löwisohn's book is cited in scholarly studies as a seminal work of Haskalah's attempt to create a corpus of poetics and rhetorics of biblical literature. Even though Löwisohn mentions several external sources in classical literature, such as Horace, Virgil, Longinus, and Shakespeare, he does not cite any recent non-Jewish biblical scholar such as Lowth or Herder.[40]

Most scholars acknowledge Herder's influence on Löwisohn's *Melitzat Yeshurun.*[41] For example, Klausner was of the opinion that "certainly, there is a

37 Juda Leib Ben Zeev: Mavo Lemikre'ei Kodesh [Introduction to Scriptures], Vienna 1810; G. Kressel facsimile edition, 1967), p. 8 (my pagination).

38 Kressel, G.: "Befetaḥ Hamavo" [At the Opening to the Introduction"] in Ben Zeev: Mavo Lemikre'ei Kodesh, p. 3 (my pagination).

39 Ibid., p. 4a.

40 Löwisohn, Shlomo: Melitzat Yeshurun [The Rhetoric of Yeshurun], Wien 1816.

41 Lachover, F.: Toldot Hasifrut Ha'ivrit Haḥadashah [History of Modern Hebrew Literature], I, Tel Aviv 1928; Shapira, •. N., Toldot Hasifrut Ha'ivrit Haḥadashah [History of Modern

visible influence of Herder's famous book *Vom Geist der ebräischen Poesie*, and perhaps also of Eichhorn's ... book, but not more than an influence."[42]

Most probably it was Isaac Baer Levinsohn (known by the acronym Rival), who started this notion of Löwisohn's indebtedness to Herder. In a letter to his father, he writes, "certainly you have seen [...] the book *Melitzat Yeshurun*; by the way, let me inform you that most of his words there are taken from the books of Heḥacham Herder, the author of the wonderful book *Über die ebräische Poesie* [sic!]."[43]

Tova Cohen has shown Löwisohn's indebtness to Lowth's work on biblical poetry.[44] But she did not examine Herder's possible influence on Löwisohn. Only in one case does she say that Löwisohn interpreted Song of Song, in counter-distinction to Mendelssohn, as a love story, not citing the rabbinical interpretation of the book as an allegory. While not following traditional interpretation, which Mendelssohn cited, Löwisohn did accept Herder's view (without citing his name) that rejects the allegorical interpretation of Song of Song and claims that Song of Songs constitutes a series of love songs.[45] Löwisohn draws on several Hebrew writers among them on Joel Brill, whom he admired, and on his introduction to Psalms.[46]

A comparison with Herder's work is still wanting.

Hebrew Literature], Ramat Gan 1967²); Shaanan, Avraham: Hasifrut Ha'ivrit Haḥadashah Lizrame'ah [Currents in Modern Hebrew Literature], I, Tel Aviv 1962); Zinberg, Israel: Toldot Sifrut Yisrael [History of Jewish Literature], V, Tel Aviv 1959; Fichman, Jacob: "Al 'Melitzat Yeshurun'" [On 'Melitzat Yeshurun'] in Löwisohn, Shlomo: Melitzat Yeshurun [The Rhetoric of Yeshurun], Tel Aviv 1944, p. ix.

42 Klausner: Historiah Shel Hasifrut Ha'ivrit Haḥadashah [note 1], I, p. 271.

43 Levinsohn, I. B.: Be'er Yitzhak [Yitzhak's Well], Warsaw 1899, p. 28, n. 1. See also, Cohen, Tova: Meḥalom Limtzi'ut [From Dream to Reality], Israel 1982, S. 62; Klausner: Historiah Shel Hasifrut Ha'ivrit Haḥadashah [note 1], I, S. 272–274, also cites from Graetz that Löwisohn understood the splendor of Hebrew poetry... more than Herder; he understood the language as a mother tongue (citing from Graetz-Trivush: Divrei Yemei Hayehudim [History of the Jews], p. 327. Israel Moshe Horn, in his chapter on Herder's influence on Shlomo Löwisohn, argues against Levinsohn's allegation of direct borrowing from Herder; but he does argue that there was an influence. See his "Al 'Melitzat Yeshurun'" [On 'Melitzat Yeshurun'], Maḥkarim [Research; Studies], Israel 1951, p. 135–142.

44 Cohen, Tova: Melitzat Yeshurun by Shlomo Löwisohn [S. L.'s 'Melitzat Yeshurun' (The Rhetoric of Yeshurun)], Ramat Gan 1988. See Lowth, Robert: Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews (1787), Hildesheim 1969, facsimile edition).

45 Cohen: Melitzat Yeshurun by Shlomo Löwisohn [note 44], pp. 44, 197.

46 Ibid., p. 45.

IX. Herder's Influence on the Maskilim's Poetics and Aesthetics

It is incumbent upon us also to search for Herder's influence in the formation of poetics and aesthetics in Haskalah literature, which may or may not be related to biblical poetry. Several examples here from Wessely, Euchel and Brill will be mentioned for general reference, which still require additional work:

Herder's Possible Influence on Wessely: Traces of Herder's influence may be found in Wessely's concept of poetry, which he endeavored to define in his introduction to *Shirei Tiferet.* Wessely considered poetry as "God's gift" which is innate in man's soul. To him, the origin of poetry is divine. Wessely asserted that through poetry the poet is able to approach his reader directly and affect his soul in a unique way that cannot be achieved through prose. As mentioned earlier, Herder's stand regarding language and poetry, especially Hebrew, and their origins is rather ambiguous. Wessely could have read Herder's statement in support of the unique nature of Hebrew, as follows:

> "Was Etymologie und Grammatik betrifft (ich sage nicht Syntax und Schreibart) ist die alte Ebräische Sprache ein Meisterwerk sinnlicher Kürze und Ordnung. Man möchte sagen: ein Gott habe sie für kindliche Menschen erfunden, um mit ihnen wie ein Spiel der frühesten Logik zu spielen."[47]

Euchel's View of Poetry: Likewise, Euchel presents his view of poetry, expressing his agreement with Wessely about the advantage of poetry and relating it to the senses of hearing and sight which are behind the art of music and painting. Now, this analogy was offered by Herder in *Vom Geist der ebräischen Poesie,* using the ear and the eye as the instruments through which poetry gets to the heart,[48] although it should be noted that it was previously suggested by Bodmer and Breitinger.[49] According to Euchel, the artistic poem is a product of these two senses: hearing and sight. Man's soul, seeking "perfection and order in everything as a whole and in its details." Thus, poetry is able to link directly and inwardly with man's soul and to communicate with it in its unique language. This notion was accepted by Wessely and most probably stemmed from Herder's writings.

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47 Herder: Herder: Werke [note 13], V, p. 988. [English translation: "In regard to its etymology and grammar, (I do not say its syntax and style of composition) the ancient Hebrew language is a masterpiece of conciseness and orderly arrangement, corresponding to the impressions of sense. Once might well suppose a Divine Being had devised it for the infancy of the human race, in order to communicate, as it were, is short, the earliest conceptions of logical order" (Herder, J. G.: The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry, translated by James Marsh, II, Burlington 1833, p. 29)].

48 Herder: Werke [note 13], V, p. 979: „Sie sind Poesie fürs Auge und Ohr, durch welche beide sie das Herz besänftigen oder bestürmen."

49 Wehrli, Max: "The Age of Enlightenment". German Literature A Critical Survey, ed., Bruno Boesch, London 1971, p. 147.

Brill's View of Poetry: Brill, too, believes that poetry is "God given" and it is intended to arouse the soul's faculties.[50]

X. The Hebrew Language and State of the People

In the Maskilim's views of the Hebrew language one can find some traces of Herder and some other German thinkers of the time. Firstly, the notion that Hebrew was the language of creation and "the mother of all languages" did prevail in the writings of several German writers among them Hamann.[51] It was based on Christian and Jewish sources. Of course, the Maskilim did not have to resort to German thinkers to get this idea, which is ingrained in Judaic sources, especially *Hakuzari*, but the German support was always welcome.[52]

Ben Zeev's Concept of Language: One of the topics of discussion among the Maskilim was the subject of language in its relations to the state of the people and to its culture. This was indeed part of an on-going discussion in German *Aufklärung*. Ben Zeev stated in 1796 that "the viability of a language is dependent on the viability of its people. It will rise with its rising and will fall when it falls."[53] He reiterated this concept in 1797 in the introduction to his book *Otzar Hashorashim* (Treasure of Roots), saying that "language will change under circumstances as the changes in the people who speak it."[54] Ben Zeev is trying to explain the decline of the Hebrew language as a result of the low ebb of the Jewish people in its exile. Of course, we are familiar with Herder's discussion on the relations of language and its culture.

While not citing Herder nor referring to his work specifically, it could be assumed that Ben Zeev must have known Herder's discussion of the rise and fall of the Greek and Roman civilizations and others, their cultural achievements, and their correlation to their language. Language, to Herder, mirrors its culture, and it serves to improve humanity.[55]

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50 Brill: "Hakdamah Rishonah" [note 34], S. 6–7.

51 See Stahl, E. L./Yuill, W. E.: German Literature of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries, New York 1970, p. 55; Blackall, Eric A.: The Emergence of German as a Literary Language 1700–1775, Cambridge 1959, pp. 451ff.; Ritchie, J. M.: Periods in German Literature, Great Britain 1967, p. 87; Olender, Maurice: The Language of Paradise, Cambridge 1992, pp. 4–5. Herder: Werke [note 13], V, p. 988.

52 See note 25, above.

53 Juda Leib Ben Zeev: "Hakdamah" [Introduction], Talmud Lashon Ivri [Study of the Hebrew Language], Vienna 1827; first edition: 1796, S. 3a.

54 Juda Leib Ben Zeev: Otzar Hashorashim [Treasure of Roots], I, Vienna 1807, in the introduction, p. 12 (my pagination).

55 Herder, Johann Gottfried: Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit, in: Herder: Werke [note 13], VI, pp. 345–355.

XI. Herder's Acceptance in the 1820s

In the 1820s we notice a growing acceptance of Herder's poetical works exemplified by the publication of Herder's poems in Hebrew translation.

Herder's Shlomo Melech Yisrael, 1822: In 1822, Wilhelm Röther, a teacher of Hebrew language at the Gymnasium of Heidelberg, published *Shlomo Melech Yisrael*, a translation into Hebrew with the original German of Herder's *Salomon, König von Israel.*[56] It is an 8-page pamphlet in small format. The book divides Solomon's life and work into two: his youth and his old age, and the respective viewpoints of the wisest of all men. This division follows the accepted concept in rabbinical writings.

There is no introduction, unfortunately, but the translator selected three mottoes to express his view of Solomon and / or Herder. One praises wisdom and reason (from the proverbs of Salomon), the second cites the notion of love, from Song of Songs, and the third, quotes from Kohelet (Ecclesiastes): "Havel havalim amar Kohelet havel havalim hakol havel" (Vanity of Vanity, said Kohelet, all is vanity). Basically, these mottoes present a succint summary of Salomon's three literary masterpieces.

Herder's Poems in Bikurei Ha'itim: Bikurei Ha'itim, the Haskalah journal that was launched in 1820 in Vienna by the former editor of *Hame'asef*, Shalom Hacohen, did publish three poems by Herder in translation. They are: "Sonne und Mond" (1824), selections from "Morgenländische Blumenlese" (1827), and "Das Kind der Sorge" (1831).[57]

In *Bikurei Ha'itim* we also notice the appearance of translations of other important German poets: Goethe, for one, and Schiller, who were omitted from *Hame'asef*. However, to those who claimed that *Hame'asef* was behind its time for not publishing contemporary poets, we can point out that the editors of *Bikurei Ha'itim* resorted to many of the 18th-century German writers, whose poems appeared in *Hame'asef*, and also published poems by Klopstock, Ramler, Gessner, Gellert, Kleist, and Lessing. Thus, the same explanation offered earlier concerning *Hame'asef* policy of translation should be applied also to *Bikurei Ha'itim*.

Finally, some cursory, interim conclusions: Acceptance of Johann Gottfried Herder, his writing and thought in early Hebrew Haskalah in Germany was haphazard, but was definitely remarkably noticeable.

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56 Röther, Wilhelm: Shlomo Melech Yisrael [Shlomo King of Israel], Heidelberg 1822. The poem is taken from Herder's Parabeln: „Der Jüngling Salomo" and „Salomo in seinem Alter", in: Herder: Werke [note 13], III, pp. 738–740.

57 "Bikurei Ha'itim", IV (1824), pp. 138–141: "Sonne und Mond"; VII (1827), pp. 133–135: Aus "Morgenländische Blumenlese"; and XI (1831), pp. 162–163: "Das Kind der Sorge".

It should be noted that Herder was a Protestant theologian, and his commentary on biblical poetry is viewed, in several instances, from a somewhat Christological point of view – his literary analysis notwithstanding – connecting the so-called Old Testament to the New Testament. This was probably one of the reasons for some slow acceptance by the Maskilim in his time.