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Euchel's Reception Throughout the 19th-Century Haskalah

„הפללת ראות אותי רועה בשדה המדעי?״

„Did you imagine seeing me
leading in the field of knowledge?“

(Euchel's letter to Joel Brill in the introduction
to his biography of Moses Mendelssohn)

When Christoph Schulte informed me of the conference, I wrote him that it will be “an important commemoration of a person whom very few people know, yet more people ought to know.”

Already in the 1970s, I pointed to Isaac Euchel's importance in the annals of the Haskalah, a notion which was adopted afterwards by other scholars as they continued to explore his life and work. Upon convening this special conference to commemorate the 250th anniversary of Euchel's birth, there is no doubt about his unique place and pivotal role in the Hebrew and Jewish Haskalah. I compliment the organizers of this conference for initiating this special event, so befittingly near the scene of Euchel's activities.¹

Well, this is my assessment of Euchel's contributions to the Haskalah. What, though, did the followers of the later Hebrew Haskalah in the 19th century think of Euchel, i.e. during the time in which the Haskalah developed in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, in Italy and Galicia, and then in Russia, Poland, and Lithuania?

As part of my recent comprehensive study of the reception of the early German Hebrew Haskalah in the 19th century, I explored the reception of Euchel as the main figure of the early Haskalah. This is the topic of my contribution here.

To study the reception of an individual writer and, for that matter, the reception of literature or a literary movement, I have formulated as a guideline several criteria of reception. These include locating, studying, and analyzing:

¹ Moshe Pelli, *The Age of Haskalah*, Leiden 1979 (revised edition: Lanham 2006), ch. 10; on Euchel, see Andreas Kennecke, *Isaac Euchel. Architekt der Haskala*, Göttingen 2007; *Isaak Euchel, Vom Nutzen der Aufklärung. Schriften zur Haskala*, Andreas Kennecke (ed.), Düsseldorf 2001.

- reprints or new editions of books and articles by a writer whose work was published by later maskilim in the 19th century;
- published biographies of the writer;
- memoirs of 19th-century maskilim in which the impact of a particular writer on their intellectual development is discussed;
- discussions on the writer's life, work, and contribution to the development of Haskalah;
- the inclusion of the writer and his work in respective literary histories and surveys of Haskalah literature;
- the reception and acceptance of the writer's ideology and ideas; and
- the literary reception of a writer's his style and art, including acceptance or rejection thereof.

A theory of reception, such as the one proposed by Hans Robert Jaus, is not addressed in this article.²

Three Main Categories of Citing Euchel

Upon reviewing these criteria and examining the 19th-century writings under study, it is my conclusion that Euchel was cited mostly for his contributions in three main categories:

- as an editor of, and his writings in, *Hame'asef*;
- as a commentator and translator of a biblical book and the prayer book; and
- as a biographer.

Of course, there are references which blend into more than one category or which highlight a number of additional aspects of Euchel's work. Below, I will highlight the sources of information according to the aforementioned criteria of reception and discuss the categories for classifying citations of Euchel and his works.

2 Hans Robert Jaus, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception, Theory and History of Literature*, II, Minneapolis 1982, 3-45.

Republication of Euchel's Work in *Bikurei Ha'itim*

In the category of reprints and the republication of Euchel's work, the number of his works which were 'recycled' in the 19th century is impressive.

One early phenomenon regarding the impact of the works of Euchel and his collaborators in the German Haskalah can be found in the republication of articles from *Hame'asef* in *Bikurei Ha'itim*. Published in Vienna from 1820 to 1831, this journal represents the second phase of the Haskalah in the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

To put it in perspective, from a total number of 1,916 entries in *Bikurei Ha'itim*, no less than 207 of them stemmed from the first four volumes of *Hame'asef* under Euchel's editorship. Among these were several of Euchel's own articles. For example, the pivotal prospect of *Hame'asef*, was reprinted in *Bikurei Ha'itim*. *Nahal Habesor* delineates the contents and the mission of the journal and spells out the maskilim's program as they established the Hebrew press and founded the Society of the Seekers of Hebrew Language ("Hevrat Dorshei Le-shon Ever"). It also highlights Euchel's vital role therein and attests to Euchel's letter soliciting advice from Naphtali Herz Wessely, the personification of the Haskalah in the eyes of the maskilim, and Wessely's reply.³

Another important reprint which exemplifies Euchel's role as a spokesman of the Haskalah was his programmatic article in the first volume of *Hame'asef* on the need to learn and understand ancient history. This article illustrates Euchel's wide range of interests as he began to explore the definition of biography and its relation to history, an interest which he later developed further as a biographer. In effect, the article became a powerful call for free and open scholarly and scientific pursuits, arguing that such a probe contradicts neither the essence nor the spirit of Judaism.⁴

Bikurei Ha'itim reprinted a variety of other important articles by Euchel from *Hame'asef*. Among them were articles pertaining to the following topics: the acrimonious controversy related to the early burial of the dead, in which Euchel advocates the position of the Haskalah. Another controversial article by

3 Isaac Euchel, et al., נחל הבסור (*Nahal Habesor*; "The Brook Besor, or Good Tidings," prospectus of *Hame'asef*), in: *Hame'asef* 1 (1783/84) (bound with vol. 1), 1–15.

4 Euchel, דבר אל הקורא מתועלת דברי הימים הקדמונים (*Davar el Hakore Mito'elet Divrei Hayamim Hakadmonim*; "A Word to the Reader about the Advantage of Ancient History," foreword to "History of the Greatest Sages of Israel"), in: *Hame'asef* 1 (1783/84), 9–14.

Euchel rejected some of the *Piyutim*. Here, he follows Maimonides and is in line with the position of many maskilim.⁵

The journal also gave prominent attention to Euchel's creative writings by republishing his travelogue and letters (*Igrot Yitzhak Eichel*) and translating into German an adapted version of his biography of Isaac Abravanel. While arguably the republication of early material from *Hame'asef* may indicate a lack of publishable material on the editors' desks, there is sufficient evidence that a real demand existed for reprints of the works of earlier maskilim. In highlighting the reprints of Euchel's work, it should be noted that the editors of *Bikurei Ha'itim* republished almost everything that was printed in *Hame'asef* with some exceptions. Thus, they did not exclusively select Euchel's articles for republication.⁶

Republication of Scriptures: Euchel as a Translator and Commentator

Regarding the second category, the perception and reception of Euchel as a commentator and translator of Proverbs is prevalent in the literature of the 19th century. This is not surprising, for in his introduction to Proverbs, which was initially published in Berlin in 1790, Euchel expresses theories on the poetics of proverbs and the aesthetics of poetry, and was thus considered one of the literary theoreticians of the early Haskalah.

Euchel's translation and commentary of Proverbs was clearly quite popular. In the thirty years following its first publication, it was republished in at least five different editions and, additionally, in several collected editions of the

5 Euchel, דבר אל המדברים (*Davar el Hamedabrim*; "A Word to the Medabrim"), in: *Hame'asef* 3 (1786/87), 105–110. Euchel's notes that he did not present any innovations in his criticism, but rather, as Rambam himself wrote, argues against certain *Piyutim* in that some notions of heresy were found in them (106–107). Euchel apologizes and writes that he did not intend to mock the *Piyutim* and deride those who say them and that he did not come to change the "custom of Israel." Nonetheless, he subsequently issues a demand "to seat wise and god-fearing men to supervise on matter of the prayers" (108). The maskilim had a special interest to update the prayer book and make it available for all via translation into German.

6 Regarding בכורי העתים (*Bikurei Ha'itim*), cf. Pelli, *Bikurei Ha'itim – The 'First Fruits' of the Haskalah. An Annotated Index to Bikurei Ha'itim, the Hebrew Journal of the Haskalah in Galicia*, Jerusalem 2005, 45, 51–52, 54, 66, 70, et seq.

whole Tanach.⁷ However, this does not distinguish Euchel's works from those of other maskilim, because translations and commentaries of, and introductions to, biblical books by maskilim, among them Aaron Wolfsohn, Joel Brill, and Juda Leib Ben Zeev, were also republished in many editions during the 19th century. The reprinting of such works illustrates the spread of the earlier Haskalah's contribution to Jewish scholarship and to the proverbial 'Jewish bookshelf'. It seems that their editions were popular among aspiring maskilim who wished to both identify with moderate Haskalah and adhere to traditional Judaism.

The view of Euchel as a commentator of Proverbs was an established notion in the 19th century. His work was cited and discussed by later maskilic commentators. For example, Isachar Beer Schlesinger, a Bohemian teacher, writer, and editor of *Bikurei Ha'itim*, cites in 1827 Euchel's definition of *Hiddah* – חדה (חידוד) – as an authoritative source in his introduction to his own translation and commentary of Proverbs.⁸

At times, later maskilim disagreed with Euchel's translation. Among them, Schlesinger rejects Euchel's translation of Proverbs 15:26 and suggests instead another translation,⁹ and Juda Jeitteles, a Prague Maskil and another editor of *Bikurei Ha'itim*, corrects in 1829 the translation of the prayer מִן אֲבוֹת in Euchel's and David Friedländer's *Siddur*.¹⁰ Nevertheless, Euchel's stature as a biblical scholar and contributor to a major enterprise of the German Haskalah, namely the *Be'ur* and its counterparts, was generally accepted in the 19th century.

7 Euchel, משלי (Proverbs), Berlin 1790, Dessau 1804, Fürth 1805, Vienna 1817 under the title: כתבי קודש (*Katvei Kodesh*; "Holy Scriptures"), Offenbach 1826, etc.

8 Isachar [Bernhard] Beer Schlesinger, אבני קלע (*Avnei Kela*; definitions of witticism, riddle, epigram), in: *Bikurei Ha'itim* 8 (1827), 36–37.

9 Schlesinger, תועבת יי מחשבות רע וטהרים אמרי נעם (*To'evot Hashem Maḥshevot Ro'a Utehorim Imrei-No'am*; commentary of verse), in: *Bikurei Ha'itim* 10 (1829), 58. Schlesinger issued his own commentary on the book of Mishlei with a translation into German in Prague in 1832; see Getzel Kressel, לכסיקון הספרות העברית (*Leksikon Hasifrut Haivrit, Cyclopedia of Modern Hebrew Literature*), Merḥaviah 1965, vol. 2, 941.

10 Juda ben Jona Jeitteles, ריגע ("Rebuke," correction of the translation of the prayer הברכות), in: *Bikurei Ha'itim* 9 (1828), 42–43.

Republication of Euchel's Biography of Mendelssohn: Its Use as an Historical Source

One of Euchel's major achievements and, in effect, most lasting contribution is his biography of Moses Mendelssohn. This work was so popular in the century after its publication in 1789 that it was republished in three subsequent editions.¹¹ The biography of Mendelssohn was first serialized in *Hame'asef* and then published in book form by the maskilic press in Berlin. It circulated widely among the maskilim and often was the only source for young, non-German speaking maskilim in their pursuits of learning about Mendelssohn's admired personality and his role in the Haskalah. It was cited by many maskilim throughout the 19th century.

One such reference appears in an assessment of Mendelssohn based on Euchel's biography by the leading Russian maskil Isaac Baer Levinsohn. In order to signify Mendelssohn's uniqueness, Levinsohn cites the well-known phrase which appears on cover of the book: "*yakar bedoro yahid be'amo*" ("precious in his generation, unique in his people").¹² Similarly, the Vilna writer and editor Shmuel Yosef Fuenn cites Euchel and his biography as source of information about Mendelssohn.¹³ Mordechai Aharon Günzburg also mentions in his autobiography *Aviezer* Euchel's biography of Mendelssohn as a well-known classic.¹⁴

Euchel's first-hand portrayal of Mendelssohn and his interpretation of Mendelssohn's stance on Judaism is seen by the Italian maskil Isaac Shmuel Reggio as proof of Mendelssohn's adherence to traditional Judaism. Reggio disputes the radical interpretation of Mendelssohn's position, arguing instead that his so-called students misrepresented their mentor and teacher and actually falsified his teachings.

11 Euchel, תולדות רבנו משה בן מנחם (*Toldot Rabenu Moshe ben Menahem; Biography of Moses Mendelssohn*), in: *Hame'asef* 4 (1788), 113–144, 177–208, 337–368 and *Hame'asef* 5 (1789), 33–64; subsequent editions: תולדות רבנו החכם משה בן מנחם, Berlin 1788; תולדות הרב הכולל החכם החוקר אלהי רבנו משה בן מנחם, Vienna 1814; תולדות רבנו משה בן מנחם, החכם החוקר אלהי רבנו משה בן מנחם, in: זמירות ישראל (*Zemiroth Yisrael; Israel's Hymns*), Lemberg 1860.

12 Isaac Baer Levinsohn, *T'udah Beyisrael* [Testimony in Israel], Vilna 1828 (Jerusalem 1977), 151; Shimshon Bloch also cited the biography of Moses Mendelssohn, in: כרם חמד (*Kerem Hemed*), 2 (1836), letter 8, 85.

13 Shmuel Yosef Fuenn, *Safa Len'e'manim* [Language for Trusty Men], Vilna 1881, 91–92.

14 Mordechai Aharon Günzburg, אביעזר (*Aviezer*), Vilna 1864, introduction.

Reggio came to the defense of Mendelssohn in 1828 in his *Hatorah Vehaphilosophiah*.¹⁵ Six years later, he continued his argument for his interpretation of Mendelssohn in a long footnote in his edition of Eliahu Delmedigo's *Behinat Hadat*.¹⁶ Here, he relies on Euchel's biography and the selections of Mendelssohn's *Jerusalem* translated into Hebrew found therein. Reggio argues that Mendelssohn's student Reb Itzik Eichel could not possibly have misunderstood Mendelssohn's unambiguous, clear, and self-evident statement about the *mitzvot*, which he cites, namely that "the *mitzvot* which are practiced in all places are considered sacred for you the seeds of Israel." Reggio then asks in a rhetorical manner: "[i]s it not clear what our rabbi has written?"

Euchel's personal testimony thus became a historic document, one which was accepted by Reggio, a follower of Mendelssohn, whom he considered both a moderate maskil and an adherent to traditional Judaism.

In Memoirs of Later Maskilim: The Impact of Euchel's Biography and Work

The impact of Euchel's biography of Mendelssohn can be further established by studying memoirs written by later maskilim. While reminiscing on his youth in his 1879 memoirs, the prolific writer and editor of the Galician and Russian Haskalah Abraham Baer Gottlober describes how he became a maskil. He relates to the reader how, upon receiving the biography of Mendelssohn, he read it from morning till evening without interruption. He further attests to Euchel's artistic portrayal by noting that the descriptions found in his biography were so vivid that he could visualize through his mind's eyes everything that happened to Mendelssohn as described in the book.

As previously mentioned, an important aspect of Euchel's biography was his rendering of parts of Mendelssohn's *Jerusalem* into Hebrew. Many of the young maskilim, who, during their initiation into the Haskalah, could not read German, resorted to this source alone for Mendelssohn's ideas about Judaism, for Mendelssohn's *Jerusalem* was translated into Hebrew for the first time in 1867. This will be discussed later in more detail.

15 Isaac Shmuel Reggio, התורה והפילוסופיה (*Hatorah Vehaphilosophiah*), Vienna 1827; כרם חמד (*Kerem Hemed*), 1 (1833), letter 24, 87–89.

16 Eliahu Delmedigo, *Behinat Hadat* [Probing Religion], Vienna 1833, 126.

Indeed, this is exactly what the young Gottlober experienced. He notes in his memoirs that, as he read passages from *Jerusalem* in Euchel's biography, he decided to read Mendelssohn's work in the original German. Consequently, he aspired to learn both Hebrew and German perfectly so that he could translate the whole work into Hebrew.¹⁷ Indeed, he actually wrote these memoirs twelve years after he had translated *Jerusalem* into Hebrew. One wonders whether his projection of this notion onto his childhood is authentic or imagined. This is a question that all students of autobiographies and memoirs face in such contexts.

A related question arises concerning Gottlober's claim that he had appreciated Euchel's biography and translation of *Jerusalem* in his youth. Indeed, in his own translation of *Jerusalem* written prior to his memoirs, he writes in a footnote that he had read the biography and the selections of *Jerusalem* found therein in his childhood. However, as he asserts, at that time he knew that Euchel did not do what a translator ought to do; for instead of bringing the words of Mendelssohn verbatim, Euchel integrated them into his biography of Mendelssohn as part of his own narrative.¹⁸

The reliability of such claims is questionable. Regardless of their validity, though, Gottlober clearly sees Euchel and his biography of Mendelssohn as important topics for his memoirs.

A different question concerns Euchel's biblical translation and commentary. Gottlober reports that, although he studied the book of Psalms with Mendelssohn's German translation in his youth, he had great difficulties understanding the German. Then, he writes, "my eyes lit up especially from R[eb] Itzik Eichel's commentary."¹⁹ While this is definitely complimentary to Euchel, it seems that Gottlober made a mistake, because it was actually Joel Brill who wrote the commentary on Psalms. At any rate, Euchel was very much on Gottlober's mind.

17 Abraham Baer Gottlober, *Zichronot Mimei Ne'urai* [Youthful Memoirs], III (Warsaw, 1880/81), pp. 31–32; also printed in *Zichronot Umasa'ot* [Memoirs and Travels], vol. 1, דורות (*Dorot*) (Jerusalem 1976), 229–230.

18 Moses Mendelssohn, *Sefer Yerushalayim* [Jerusalem], transl. Gottlober, Zhitomir 1867, xxii, in a note.

19 Gottlober, זכרונות מימי נעורי (*Zichronot Mimei Ne'urai*) (op. cit. 16), 34; *ibid.*, זכרונות ומסעות (*Zichronot Umasa'ot*) (op. cit. 16), 234.

Meir Halevi Letteris' Biography of Euchel: Euchel as a Major Figure in the Haskalah

The perception of Euchel as a major figure of the Haskalah emerged in the mid-19th century in the writings of Meir Halevi Letteris, a prolific Galician writer and editor. Letteris was much involved in exploring the enterprises of the first maskilim, especially their major literary product *Hame'asef* and the image of Euchel, its editor. Being an editor himself, Letteris undertook to republish a new edition of the periodical, but he was only able to finish publication of the first volume from 1783/84.

In conjunction with his new edition of *Hame'asef* in 1862,²⁰ Letteris wrote a short biography of Euchel which he published as part of his edition.²¹

This category of biographies written on the founding fathers of the Haskalah in Germany serves as an indicator of their reception by representatives of the later Haskalah. In the course of the century, other biographies were published of Mendelssohn (in *Bikurei Ha'itim*, in German), Wessely, and other maskilim.²²

By far, it is Letteris' biography which praises Euchel most. It is clear that Letteris admired Euchel and what he stood for. In fact, it is possible to detect some sort of psychological attachment on part of Letteris towards the figure of Euchel, who, like himself, was an editor and active in the literary movement of the Haskalah.

Letteris' biography of Euchel is in effect a hagiography. He attributes the appearance of Euchel to the Almighty, as Euchel does with his image of Mendelssohn. Letteris writes: "one of the remnants [of the people] that God

20 Meir Halevi Letteris, publisher, *Hame'asef Lishnat* HTKMD, 2nd ed. (Vienna, 1862) "El Hakore" [To the Reader], 1–2.

21 Letteris, תולדות החכם ר' איצק אייכל ז"ל (*Toldot Hehacham Rabenu Itzik Eichel*), in: *Hame'asef* (op. cit. 21), 41–47. This biography was also published in his book זכרון בספר (*Zikaron Basefer*), Vienna 1869, 90–97.

22 On Mendelssohn, see: anon., לעבנסגעשיכטע מאזעס, תולדות רבנו משה בן מנחם אדער: לעבנסגעשיכטע מאזעס, מענדעלסזאהניס (*Toldot Rabenu Moshe ben Menahem*); a second biography in the section תולדות גדולי ישראל (*Toldot Gedolei Yisrael*), in: בכורי העתים (*Bikurei Ha'itim*), 1 (1833), 20–26; on Wessely, see: David Friedrichsfeld, זכר צדיק (*Zecher Tzadik*), Amsterdam 1809; Yahbik, תולדות ר' נפתלי (*Toldot Rabbi Naftali*), המגיד (*Hamagid*), 1 (1857), no. 26, 30, 33, 36, 37, 51; ספר דברי שלום ואמת (*Sefer Divrei Shalom Ve'emet*), published by Kalman Schulmann, 1886, 1–31; and Salomon Mandelkern, תולדות ר' נפתלי הירץ (*Toldot Rabbi Naftali Herz Weisel Z.L.*), האסיף (*Ha'asif*), 3 (1887), Warsaw, 404–417.

has summoned to help and benefit the people by his deeds while they were walking in the dark in the past generation was the learned author [*“Hebacham hamelitz”*] whose lips flow with myrrh, Reb Yitzhak Eichel [...].”²³ Letteris asserts that, with the publication of *Hame’asef*, his masterpiece, Eichel made a name for himself together with his renowned friends and associates for “everlasting glory.”²⁴

Letteris’ view of Eichel’s place in Jewish history can be inferred from his use of the motto from Johann Wolfgang Goethe’s *Faust* which opens his biography: “*Was glänzt ist für den Augenblick geboren; / Das Aechte bleibt der Nachwelt unverloren*” (“What glitters is born for the moment; / the truth remains for posterity”).²⁵

Based on this biography, it is worthwhile at this point to summarize the attributes which Letteris identifies in Eichel:

- His interest in secular studies. Eichel was said to be among the first maskilim to seek “*Hochmot nochriyot*,” i.e. foreign disciplines, a scholarly pursuit of non-Judaic subjects, at a university, where he was instructed by the great philosopher Immanuel Kant. In all of Eichel’s writings, Letteris adduces, one can detect the impact of Kant’s philosophy. Actually, Letteris believes that Eichel’s probe into Judaism was even based on the foundations of Kant’s thinking.²⁶ Letteris also argues that Eichel loved free investigation;²⁷
- His establishment of a maskilic society and *Hame’asef*. Letteris considers Eichel’s major contributions to be the founding of the Society of the Seekers of Hebrew Language (“*Hevrat Dorshei Leshon Ever*”) and, for the first time in Jewish history, a modern periodical in Hebrew.²⁸ The messages that *Hame’asef* disseminated among the Jews will remain for ever, Letteris writes, and its memory will not fade until the last generation.²⁹ In an euphuistic style of grandiloquence, he expresses his admiration for Eichel’s unique contribution: “as long as the heavens exist upon this earth, it would not cease making fruits in the hearts of the children of Israel, leading them to

23 Letteris, תולדות (*Toldot*) (op. cit. 21), 41.

24 Ibid., 40.

25 Cited from Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Faust, Vorspiel auf dem Theater*, Leipzig 1790, 71–74: “*Ofť, wenn es erst durch Jahre durchgedrungen, / Erscheint es: in vollendeter Gestalt. / Was glänzt, ist für den Augenblick geboren; / Das Echte bleibt der Nachwelt unverloren.*”

26 Letteris, תולדות (*Toldot*) (op. cit. 21), 42.

27 Ibid., 42 (footnote).

28 Ibid., 42.

29 Ibid., 43.

acquire beneficial knowledge” (הוציא סגולה יקרה לפעולת אדם, אשר כימי) (השמים על הארץ לא תמוש מעשות פרי בלב נערי בני ישראל להשכיל להטיב).³⁰

Letteris considers the journal a major guide which led the Jews in modern times toward enlightenment;³¹ and

- His literary contribution. As discussed, Letteris praises Euchel's literary work, including his translation and commentary of Proverbs and biography of Mendelssohn. Emphasizing the latter work's impact on the maskilim, he writes that “it kindled a flame in the heart of every knowledge-seeking reader to love wisdom,” and that “this little book affected greatly the House of Israel” (“המחברת הקטנה הזאת פעלה רב טוב לבית ישראל”).³² In addition, Letteris had high praise for Euchel's epistolary story *Igrot Meshulam ben Uriah ha'Eshtemoi* (“The Letters of Meshulam the Son of Uriah Ha'eshtemoi”). They “are more precious than pure gold” to him.³³

Negative attitudes toward Euchel during his own lifetime on part of some of his traditionalist contemporaries were met by Letteris with dismay. For, while Euchel worked to improve the lot of his people, he was criticized and attacked by those who rejected the Haskalah and its call for modernism.³⁴

Republication of Literary Materials:

In Chrestomathies, Catechisms, Primers, and Letter-Writing Guides

Another criterion used to assess the acceptance and reception of Euchel's work and that of other maskilim is the inclusion of their material in chrestomathies, catechisms, and primers. Intended primarily for school children, some of the material was used as well by adults who wished to learn Hebrew or read semi-‘canonical’ texts not available elsewhere.

Throughout the 19th century, maskilim – teachers, educators, and writers – ‘recycled’ early materials, e.g. stories, tales, fables, riddles, and similar creative writing, in chrestomathies intended for use in Jewish schools. These include

30 Ibid., 42.

31 Letteris, אל הקורא [*El Hakore*] (op. cit. 19), 1-2.

32 Letteris, תולדות (*Toldot*) (op. cit. 21), 43.

33 Ibid., 44.

34 Ibid.

Wolfssohn's textbook *Avtalyon* and Ben Zeev's primers.³⁵ Euchel's material was recycled as well. For example, Adam Martinet's textbook *Tiferet Yisrael* includes Euchel's letters to his student Michal, the travelogue in epistolary form published initially in *Hame'asef*.³⁶ These letters were deemed to have both pedagogic qualities for educating the young and literary value. Collections of letters and epistolary writings for pedagogic purposes, i.e. letter-writing guides (*Briefsteller*, בריוונשטעלערס), also serve as a source for examining the reception of Euchel's work. Letters by more or less well-known writers were presented in such collections for the purpose of teaching good letter writing; other letters were 'stock' letters written for various occasions, to be copied and used for personal correspondence.³⁷

One such letter in the category of writers' correspondence was Euchel's desperate letter to Shalom Hacohen from 1799, in which Euchel asked him to help in the efforts to revive *Hame'asef*. This significant and quite powerful letter sheds light on the state of the Hebrew Haskalah in Germany at the *fin de siècle*. Moreover, it reveals the depth of Euchel's personal disappointment in not realizing the goals that the Haskalah had set for itself sixteen years earlier. Euchel's letter was recycled throughout the century as a historical document, emblematic of the downfall of the German Haskalah. Shalom Hacohen's collection of letters *Ktav Yosher* includes both this letter and Euchel's introduction to the book of Mishlei.³⁸ His *Ktav Yosher* was republished many times during the

35 Aaron Wolfssohn, אבטליין (*Avtalyon*), Berlin 1790, Prague 1806. Juda Leib Ben Zeev, למודי המישרים (*Limudei Hamesharim*), vol. 2 of בית הספר (*Beit Hasefer*), Vienna 1811, Vienna 1849. See Uriel Ofek, *Sifrut Hayeladim Haiwrit – Hahathalah* [Hebrew Children's Literature: The Beginnings], Tel Aviv 1979; Zohar Shavit, *From Friedländer's Lesebuch to the Jewish Campe. The Beginning of Hebrew Children's Literature in Germany*, in: *The Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, XXXIII (1988), 385–415; Idem., "Harihut shel Ḥadar Hahaskalah Hayehudit Beberlin" [The Furniture in the Jewish Haskalah 'Heder'], in: Israel Bartal, Ezra Mendelsohn, and Chava Turniansky (eds.) *Studies in Jewish Culture in Honour of Chone Shmeruk*. Jerusalem 1993, 193–207.

36 Adam Martinet, תפארת ישראל (*Tiferet Yisrael*) [Glory of Israel], Bamberg 1837, 59–69.

37 Judith Halevi-Zwick, מאה 16 מאה (הבריוונשטעלערס) העבריים (מאה 16 מאה) תולדות ספרות האגרונים (הבריוונשטעלערס) העבריים (מאה 16 מאה) (20 (*Toldot Sifrut Ha'igronim (ha-brivenshtelers) Haiwriyim...*)), Tel Aviv 1990.

38 Shalom Hacohen, כתב יושר (*Ketav Yosher*) [Epistle of Righteousness], Vienna 1820.

19th century.³⁹ Letteris, too, published Euchel's letter in his collection of letters from 1868.⁴⁰

Other editors of similar anthologies did the same: Fuenn printed part of Euchel's epistolary writing in his book *Sofrei Yisrael* from 1871, an anthology of letters by classical and Haskalah writers including Mendelssohn, Wessely, and Friedländer.⁴¹

As in the case of Euchel's biography of Mendelssohn, his letter to Hacoheh was deemed in the 19th century to be both a personal testimony and first-hand evidence of the demise of the German Haskalah by one of its founders.

Views of Euchel as an Aesthetician

A further important aspect of the reception of Euchel's work can be obtained by reviewing the perception of Euchel as an expert on aesthetics in the Haskalah of the 19th century. His contribution to the poetics of the revived Hebrew literature was mentioned by several writers.

Already in 1810, Dov Baer Ginzburg, a Galician poet and contributor to the new *Hame'asef*, comments on Euchel's assessment of Wessely's poetics in his epos *Shirei Tiferet* in a review published in 1790 in *Hame'asef*.⁴²

In the introduction to his edition of Moshe Haim Luzzatto's *Leshon Limudim*,⁴³ Ginzburg accepts Euchel's definition of Wessely's work as "*shir sipuri*" (probably: an epic poem). He disagrees, however, with Euchel's definition of secondary stories in Wessely's epos that were deemed to be trivial and of less significance. Euchel calls these romances or ballads, while Ginzburg refers

39 Haim Dov Friedberg, בית עקד ספרים (*Beit Eked Sefarim*) [Library of Books], vol. 2, Tel Aviv 1952, 478, no. 556, reports of 14 editions up to 1871.

40 Letteris, ספר מכתבי עברית (*Sefer Michtevei Ivrit*) [Book of Hebrew Letters], Vienna 1868.

41 Fuenn, סופרי ישראל (*Sofrei Yisrael*) [Writers of Israel], Vilna 1871, 134–137.

42 א - א [Euchel], ביקורת ספר שירי תפארת מאת נפתלי ויזל, (*Bikoret Sefer Shirei Tiferet Me'et Naftali Weisel*) [Review of *Shirei Tiferet* by Wessely] review of modern books, first in a series), in *Hame'asef* 6 (1790), 210–221; המשך ביקורת ספר שירי תפארת (*Hemshech Bikoret Sefer Shirei Tiferet*; review of modern books, second article in a series), in *Hame'asef* 6 (1790), 346–352.

43 B. G. of Brody [Dov Ginzburg] in his introduction to Moshe Hayim Luzzatto's *Sefer Leshon Limudim* [Book of Scholarly Language, or Skilled Tongue] (Stanisławów, 1810; my edition: Sdilikov, 1826), pp. 1–14.

to them as lyrical poems, or “ספור פיוטי קטן הערך” (less valuable poetic stories). Whether right or wrong,⁴⁴ Euchel’s assessment of Wessely’s poetics left its mark on the serious discussions about aesthetics and poetics by the later maskilim.

An indication of Euchel’s impact is noticeable as late as 1853. In the introduction to his קיקיון ליונה (*Kikayon Leyonah*), the Amsterdam maskil Gabriel Polak attributes his writings and expresses his indebtedness to Wessely. He then cites Euchel’s review, in which Euchel states that writing such as Wessely’s had not been composed since the exile – a statement which has been repeated numerous times about Wessely since.⁴⁵

Historical Summaries and Overviews of Hebrew Literature

Reliable sources of information about the reception of Euchel’s work in the 19th century are the historical summaries and literary overviews of Hebrew literature which emerged in the 1880s upon the end of the Haskalah as the need arose for such assessments.

One such work on the German Haskalah was published in 1881 by the aforementioned Vilna writer and editor Shmuel Yosef Fuenn. In his overview of the history of Hebrew, Fuenn cites Euchel as one of the founding editors of *Hame’asef* who signed the prospectus *Nahal Habesor* and references Euchel’s biography as a source of information on Mendelssohn’s *Kobelet Musar*.⁴⁶ This brief citation does not say much about Euchel, and it seems that he was lost among the great historical figures of Judaism in Fuenn’s account.

Fuenn does, however, acknowledge Euchel’s contribution to biblical commentaries in a previous article published in 1844. While discussing this main sphere of activity of various maskilim, he identifies Mendelssohn as the major source of influence over the other maskilim. He then refers to Wessely mostly as

44 Franz Delitzsch, *Zur Geschichte der jüdischen Poësie vom Abschluss der heiligen Schriften Alten Bundes bis auf die neueste Zeit*, Leipzig 1836, 104. As Euchel had previously defined the term, Delitzsch defines שיר סיפורי as „Romanze“.

45 Gabriel Polak, קיקיון ליונה (*Kikayon Leyonah*), Amsterdam 1853, iii. Polak relies on Euchel’s review of *Shirei Tiferet* in *Hame’asef* and cites his article on Wessely’s epic work, remarking that “nothing like it has been done since the Israelites were exiled from their land.”

46 Fuenn, שפה לנאמנים (*Safa Lene’emanim*), (op. cit. 12), 91–92, esp. 97.

a poet, to Isaac Satanow as a proverb writer, and to Brill, Euchel, and Ben Zeev as biblical commentators.⁴⁷

A similar source of information is found in Hebrew lexica and encyclopedias of writers published by enterprising editors in the 19th century. Fuenn, for one, included an entry on Euchel in his *Kneset Yisrael*, a biographical lexicon of "the great persons of Israel known for their scholarship, wisdom and deeds," as it is cited on the title page.⁴⁸ He identifies Euchel as "a great pundit (חכם גדול) and a wonderful (נפלא) writer, one of Mendelssohn's disciples." Fuenn also cites Euchel's biography of Mendelssohn and praises his "precious and esteemed" commentary of Mishlei. Likewise, he refers to Euchel's articles in *Hame'asef* as "precious and wonderful in their ideas and beautiful style." This pundit, Fuenn writes, "was beloved and respected by the great thinkers of Berlin, Jewish and Christian alike." In his dedication to benefit and benevolence for his people, Euchel established in 1792 the Society of Friends (*Gesellschaft der Freunde*), as Fuenn notes.

Fuenn also mentions Euchel's translation of the prayer book,⁴⁹ but he is critical of the free translation that did not adhere to the meaning of the words. Nevertheless, he explains that Euchel did so "in order to show the glory of our prayers to the other nations."

Meir Weissberg: The History of Hebrew Literature

By the turn of the century, and upon the demise of Haskalah, attempts to write the history of Hebrew literature emerged. One such attempt was a series of articles entitled לתולדות הספרות העברית ("Toward a History of Hebrew Literature").

In this introduction to Hebrew literature, Meir Weissberg explains the demise of German Haskalah by citing Hacoheh's letter to Euchel⁵⁰ urging him to revive *Hame'asef* "for the glory of the Hebrew language." He then quotes several

47 Fuenn, בורות ספר שירי שפת קדש (*Bikoret Sefer Shirei Sefat Kodesh*) [Review of Book of Holy Tongue Poems], in: פרחי צפון (*Pirhei Tzafon*) [Northern Flowers], 2 (1844), 90–103, esp. 92–93.

48 Fuenn, כנסת ישראל (*Kneset Yisrael*) [The Assembly of Israel], Warsaw 1886, 96.

49 Euchel, *Gebete der hochdeutschen und polnischen Juden*, Königsberg 1786.

50 See note 38 above.

passages from the aforementioned desperate letter from Euchel that reflected the situation at that time.⁵¹

Eliezer Rosenthal: Bibliographies

Bibliographies are another source of information about Euchel, but, these are succinct and almost always just factual without assessment or value judgment. However, occasionally, they include some evaluation. For example, in the entry on Euchel's biography of Mendelssohn in Eliezer Rosenthal's *ידוע ספר*, the author praises Euchel primarily for his style and the beauty of his language.⁵² The works of other bibliographers of the time, among them Moritz Steinschneider and Isaac Ben Yaakov, are yet to be reviewed in this regard.

Evaluation of Euchel's Contribution to the Development of the Haskalah

In order to study Euchel's place in the literary consciousness of his counterparts in the later Haskalah, it is important to review evaluative statements about him and his work by other writers.

Several writers acknowledge their indebtedness to early authors of the German Haskalah, and while this could be construed as self-serving, it is nevertheless indicative of the role that German Haskalah writers played in the later Haskalah and the esteem that these held in the eyes of their followers.

As early as 1794, when he was still alive, Euchel was regarded as "the perfect one [השלם]" by the poet and playwright Yoseph Ha'efrati of Troplowitz in the introduction to his biblical drama *Meluchat Sha'ul*. This author credits Euchel and "the great and famous poet" Wessely as the originators of the idea that po-

51 Meir Weissberg, לתולדות הספרות העברית (*Letoldot Hasifrut Haivrit*) [History of Hebrew Literature], in: ממזרח ומערב (*Mimizrah Umima'arav*), 1/2 (1895), 40.

52 Eliezer Rosenthal, *ידוע ספר* (*Yode'a Sefer*) [Knowing Book; Knowledgeable], Amsterdam 1875 (1972); vol. 2 of Meir Roest, *Catalog der Hebraica und Judaica aus der L. Rosenthal'schen Bibliothek*, I, Amsterdam 1875 (Amsterdam 1966), 440.

etry and the creative expression of lofty matters are essential to the perception of God and worship of Him.⁵³

Another writer who attempted to write the history of Hebrew literature and who evaluated various Haskalah writers quite early in the 19th century was Moses Mendelson (Frankfurt) (1782–1861), also known as the 'second Mendelson'. In his book *Penei Tevel*, written in the 1840s but first published in 1872, he praises Euchel as a "wonderful man, with his awesome mastery of the Hebrew language, as it is shown in his biography of Moses Mendelssohn," which depicts the life story, essence, and qualities [תולדות ומשפט ומדות] of the man Moshe, as if he stood alive in front of the reader.⁵⁴ This kind of assessment of Euchel's quality of writing was mentioned also by other writers.

Shalom Yaakov Abramovich: In Defense of Early Haskalah

In the 1870s, the early German maskilim and their writings were the focus of intense criticism by later Maskilim, among them Peretz Smolenskin (beginning in 1873) and Uri Avraham Kovner (1864). These critics had harsh assessments of the quality of the writings of the early maskilim and their Enlightenment ideology. Smolenskin accuses Mendelssohn and his followers of causing the great waves of conversion to Christianity among German Jews and neglecting to adhere to the essence of Judaism.

Confronting this criticism, some contemporary maskilim came to the defense of the German Haskalah. In contrast to Smolenskin, the writer Shalom Yaakov Abramovich (later known by his pseudonym Mendele Mocher Sfarim) had a positive attitude and gratitude toward the early maskilim. In 1873, he writes that "the generation of Mendelssohn and his associates" adhered to the ancient national spirit of the people and did not deviate from this path.⁵⁵ Among the maskilim who worked to cultivate the Hebrew language, Abramovich cites Wessely and Euchel together with Brill and Satanow. Abramovich seemingly valued the work of the early maskilim so much that he calls on his contempo-

53 Yoseph Ha'efrati of Tropowitz, מלכות שאול (*Meluchat Sha'ul*) [Saul's Reign], Vienna 1794, 21 (introduction, my pagination).

54 Moses Mendelson-Frankfurt, פני תבל (*Pnai Tevel*) [Face of the World], Amsterdam 1872, 252.

55 Shalom Yaakov Abramovich, "Et Ledaber" [Time to Talk], introduction to his book *Toldot Hareva* [The Story of Nature], III (Vilna, 1873), viii–xxv, esp. xxv.

raries to follow in the footsteps of the members of the early Society of the Seekers of Hebrew Language (“*Hevrat Dorshei Leshon Ever*”), which later took on the name Society for the Promotion of Goodness and Resourcefulness (שוחריו והתורה). For him, this association should serve as a symbol of positive *Haskalah*.⁵⁶

He also praises the contribution of *Hame'asef* in its promotion of creative writings in Hebrew and pays tribute to its writers, whom he states will “shine as stars forever in the history of the godly people of Abraham” (אשר יזהירו) “(ככוכבים לעולם ועד בתולדות עם אלהי אברהם).

Thus, Abramovich is completely supportive of the German *Haskalah*, and he perceives Euchel to be one of the ‘founding fathers’ of the *Haskalah*.

Juda Leib Kantor: Critical of the *Haskalah*

In the 1880s and 1890s, there were additional waves of criticism against the *Haskalah* concurrent with its apparent demise.

Juda Leib Kantor, an editor and writer in Russia and elsewhere, wrote a seminal article in 1886 entitled *Dor Hame'asfim* (“The Generation of the *Me'asfim*”) on the circle of writers surrounding *Hame'asef*, in which he assesses the early German *Haskalah* in general.⁵⁷ As he remarks in a footnote, he follows the ideas of Heinrich Graetz in his history of the Jewish people, which he also translated into Hebrew, and he thus argues for Mendelssohn’s unique role, yet claims that Mendelssohn’s followers were mediocre. Among the maskilim, he mentions Euchel as having learned to write “clear and simple Hebrew” from his “teachers Mendelssohn and Wessely.”⁵⁸

While asserting that “[n]ature bestowed upon [Euchel] only a fast pen,” Kantor argues that this “deprived him of an imaginative spirit and creative vision.” The assessment is not complimentary, and, in it, he follows Graetz as well, who writes that Euchel’s style was “pleasant” when compared to the style

56 Ibid., xxiv.

57 Juda Leib Kantor, דור המאספים (*Dor Hame'asfim*) [The Measefim Generation], in: האסיף (*Ha'asif*) [The Harvest], Warsaw 1887, 1–34. Kantor notes that he follows Graetz in the essence of his article but deviated from him in matters which, to him, were incorrect, 1; cf. Heinrich Graetz, דברי ימי היהודים (*Diarei Yemei Hayehudim*) [History of the Jews], vol. 9, transl. Yoseph Eliahu Trivush, Warsaw 1904, chapter 4, 86–115.

58 Ibid., “Dor Hame'asfim”, 22.

used before his time, but rather “dry” and lacking “the power of imagination and the talent of creativity.”⁵⁹

Following in Graetz's footsteps as a historian, Kantor ignored Euchel's historical role in the early Haskalah and hardly addressed any of Euchel's literary works.

Elazar Shulman: Euchel Caused More Harm than Good

In the 1890s, even more criticism was waged against the early maskilim. The Russian maskil Elazar Shulman was critical of this group of maskilim, among them Friedländer, Satanow, and Herz Homberg, and their orientation after Mendelssohn's death. In a work published in 1892, he mentions Euchel as “the chosen among them” (one, of course, does not know whether he is being ironic here), writing that, in spite of his great work for Hebrew literature and the “goodness and benevolence” that he bestowed upon it by his literary contribution, he caused more harm through his extreme zeal for Haskalah than good in the eyes of those who still adhered to tradition.⁶⁰ In a footnote, he cites an anecdote by Ludwig Geiger about a skirmish with Wessely at Mendelssohn's home in which Wessely rebuked Euchel about his loose ways. In contrast, Wessely's letter in support of Euchel and his proposed journal, published in *Nahal Habesor*,⁶¹ demonstrates a positive attitude toward Euchel. Shulman subsequently cites Euchel's contributions to Hebrew literature, i.e. his articles in, and his efforts for, *Hame'asef*, his biography of Mendelssohn, and his translation and commentary of Proverbs.

Shulman's traditional position may explain his rejection of Euchel on the grounds of Geiger's anecdote and his branding of Euchel as doing harm to the Haskalah cause. This notion was perpetuated later in the 20th century, as illustrated by the criticism of Simon Bernfeld and others, who considered Euchel

59 Graetz, *Divrei Yemei Hayehudim*, (op. cit. 57), vol. 9, 88. He writes: “למד מברך־מנחם ומווייזיל לכתוב בשפת עבר צחה וסגנונו היה נעים לעומת הסגנון הנשחת שהיו משתמשים בו לפני התקופה הזאת. אבל יבש היה סגנונו, בלי כח הדמיון ובלי כשרון יצירה” [“He learned from Ben Menahem [Mendelssohn] and from Weisel to write in clear Hebrew and his style was pleasant as compared with the corrupt style used prior to this period. But his style was dry, and lacked imagination and creative talent.”]

60 Elazar Shulman, *Mimekor Yisrael* (From the Source of Israel), Berditshov 1892, 23.

61 Euchel, *Nahal Habesor* (op. cit. 2).

to be a radical maskil (from a religious point of view).⁶² Nevertheless, Euchel's contributions are acknowledged as well.

Mordechai Ehrenpreis: Haskalah is not Literature

Even harsher criticism in the post-Haskalah period can be found in the writings of Mordechai Ehrenpreis, who led a dispute with Aḥad Ha'am (Asher Ginsberg) on the orientation of contemporary Hebrew literature.

Representing the new trends in Hebrew literature, Ehrenpreis lashes out against the Haskalah in an article published in 1897 entitled לַאֲיֵן ("Whither?").⁶³ Clearly, his intention was to create a definite separation between the literature of the Haskalah and the writings of the group known as "the young writers" ("הצעירים") whom he represented.

In this article, Ehrenpreis criticizes the literary work of the *Me'asfim*, stating in effect, that whatever they were doing cannot be considered literature. He claims that they were united for a kind of literary activity which lacked any clear and meaningful program. They thus laid the cornerstone for "some kind of literature" which was later called "Haskalah". Yet, in essence, it was not only an imperfect and bad literature, but also a different type of writers' work which cannot be regarded as literature at all.

The new kind of literature, which he and a group of young writers represents, Ehrenpreis asserts, constitutes a struggle against the kind of work by the *Me'asfim* called Haskalah. In contrast, the young writers aspire to achieve the level of what he refers to as "true literature."⁶⁴

Ehrenpreis' tirade against the *Me'asfim* includes the argument that, because the *Me'asfim* were dilettantes, they could not have created a literary movement which could echo the lives of the people. Moreover, he accuses them of being detached from the cultural milieu of their time. According to Ehrenpreis,

62 Simon Bernfeld, דור תהפוכות (*Dor Tahapuchot*) [A Forward Generation], vol. 1, Warsaw 1914, 79. Here, he writes that Euchel ate non-Kosher food.

63 Mordechai Ehrenpreis, לַאֲיֵן (*Le'an?*) [Whither], in: חשלה (*Hashilo'ah*), 1 (1897), 489–503, esp. pp. 489–490 (Marcus Ehrenpreis, לַאֲיֵן: מסות ספרותיות (*Le'an? Masot Sifrutiyot*) [Whither, Literary Essays], in: ספריית דורות (*Dorot Library*), Jerusalem 1998, ed. with introduction and notes Avner Holtzman, 105–133, esp. 106–112; cf. Holtzman's introduction).

64 *Ibid.*, 490.

they acted neither for the benefit of their public nor toward a dedicated goal, but rather for their own personal gratification. Ehrenpreis refers mainly to the group in general and does not refer to Euchel individually. Instead, he singles out Wessely and rejects his poetry altogether.⁶⁵

Yoseph Eliahu Trivush: In Defense of Haskalah

In the years after Ehrenpreis' attack on the Haskalah, the tendency was to slight its value. Nonetheless, there were still voices of support of its contribution and pioneering enterprise.

One such defender was the Vilna writer and translator Yoseph Eliahu Trivush, who came out to defend the 'honor' of Haskalah. In his view, "every writer should be indebted to the early maskilim because only through them did we get to where we are."⁶⁶ He argues that the early maskilim were better equipped in general education and literature than many of his contemporary writers, and he mentions a number of the early maskilim by name: Wessely, Brill, Ben Zeev, and Euchel. Their writings, he asserts, were simple and innovative, and thus they excel over the work of most of the writers of his time whose writings were neither new nor simple.

Were it not for them, Trivush writes, there would be no Hebrew periodicals or daily newspapers in his day. He further argues that even the advent of modern Jewish nationalism should be attributed to the early maskilim, although they did not call it such. Although Trivush did mention Euchel as part of the group, he did not single him out.

65 Ibid., 491–492.

66 Trivush, 'ההשכלה' בכבוד (Bichvod Habaskalah) [Honoring the Haskalah], in: אחיאסף (Ahi'asaf), 8 (1900), Warsaw, n.p.: "לולא משכילי הדורות שהיו לפנינו לא היו לנו עתה לא [...] קל וחומר שלא היו לנו עתוני יום יום ואחיאסף' ויתושיה, גם הלאומיות כלה 'השלח' ולא 'פסגה' [...] ההשכלה העברית היא הרת הרוח הלאומי אשר לנו, היא גם הלאומיות הנשאת כיום גם על שפתי אנשים אשר לא ידעו קרוא עברית, אף על פי שלמשכילים הראשונים לא נודעה "בשמה זה".

Summary

The general attitude among some Hebrew writers at the end of the 19th century was critical of the Haskalah. Therefore, the deeds and writings of the early maskilim, and Euchel among them, were deemed of less importance to modern Jewish history and Hebrew literature. Yet, some writers did acknowledge their indebtedness to the pioneering work of the first maskilim.

Incidentals

Finally, Euchel achieved some lighter references in the 19th century and some literary citations in the 20th century.

The first such incidental concerns the figure of Euchel in anecdotes told about "great men of Israel". For example, in 1829, Jeitteles tells an anecdote about Euchel in his *Bikurei Ha'itim* as part of a series of anecdotes about great personalities, including the rabbis Ezekiel Landau and Jonathan Eybeschütz and maskilim such as Mendelssohn.

In his anecdote, Jeitteles highlights Euchel as an expert translator of the Bible. And so it goes: a young fellow brought a commentary that he had written on Jeremiah's Lamentations to "the glorious pundit" ("החכם המפורא") Euchel, seeking his opinion. When he returned, Euchel gave him back his work, accompanied with a scroll. As he opened it, he found freshly-written lamentations over his commentary on the book of Lamentations.⁶⁷

Euchel's Figure in Literature

Interestingly, Euchel's figure played a role in literature. In the process, he became a literary persona. In Tuvia Gutman Feder's controversial 'dialogue of the dead' entitled *Kol Mehazezim* (written in 1813, but published in 1853 or earlier in 1816), Euchel is featured as one of the protagonists together with Mendelssohn and Wessely.⁶⁸ This satiric piece was written to mock Mendel Lefin's translation

67 Jeitteles, שיחות חכמי ישראל בדורות חדשות (*Sihot Hachmei Yisrael Bedorot Hadashot*) [Conversations of the Learned of Israel in the New Generations], (anecdotes), בכורי העתים (*Bikurei Ha'itim*), 9 (1829), 149–157.

68 Tuvia Gutman Feder, קול מחצאים (*Kol Mehazezim*) [Voice of the Archers], Lemberg 1853.

of the book of Mishlei into Yiddish.⁶⁹ Euchel is depicted as being personally offended by the corrupt translation into allegedly 'bad German'.

In the 20th century, the great Hebrew writer Shmuel Yosef Agnon features Euchel in one of his stories. In *Leveit Abba* ("To Father's Home"), Euchel appears and plays an enigmatic role: "[t]hat time, one of the commentators, Yitzhak Eichel is his name, came and showed me a commentary on a difficult passage at the end of the book of Joshua or the beginning of Hosea. Eichel's commentary was somewhat questionable [...]." In the meantime, he [Euchel] took a cigarette and asked for a light. The narrator gave him a match and commented that the maskilim with all their knowledge of grammar did not know to coin the Hebrew word 'Gafrur' for such a wooden match. Eichel said, well "this 'gafrir' גפריר does make fire." He pronounced it 'Gafrir.' Then Euchel said: „What is the benefit of this match that was extinguished before it could fulfill its mission." The storyteller remarks: "I wanted to defeat him, but I was defeated." According to an interpretation of the story, Euchel was lamenting, perhaps, the demise of the Haskalah before it could fulfill its mission.⁷⁰

Itzik Manger has Euchel meeting with Juda Leib Ben Zeev to read him his play *Reb Henoch*.⁷¹

There also was a 'late encounter with Itzik Eichel' in the Israeli newspaper *Ma'ariv*. The bibliographer G. Kressel wrote an open *Letter to Itzik Eichel* in 1961, addressing him directly and giving him credit for being the founder of

69 See previous note.

70 Shmuel Yosef Agnon, לבית אבא (*Leveit Abba*) [To Father's House], in: Ibid., סמוך ונראה (*Samuch Venireh*) *All of Agnon's Stories*, Jerusalem/Tel Aviv 1962, 103–105. See an interpretation of this story by Isaac Barzilay, כשלונו של השיבה לעבר (*Kishlona shel Hashiva Le'avar*) [Failure to Go Back to the Past], in: הדואר (*Hadoar*) [Post], 23 (11 Nissan 5733), 563–565; see also Mordechai Shalev, דיוקנו של הגיבור כמחבר ביספר המעשים (*Dyokno shel Hagibor Kimehaber Besefer Hamasim*) [The Portrait of the Protagonist as an Author in The Book of Deeds], הארץ (*Haaretz*) 22 September 1968; on the coining of the word גפרור with a citation of this story, see Aharon Bar Adon שי עגנון ותחיית (S. J. Agnon *Utehiat Halashon Haivrit*) [Agnon and the Revival of the Hebrew Language], Jerusalem 1977, 175–176, 190. Hillel Weiss in a personal discussion explained Agnon's use of the word גפריר as mocking Euchel's Germanic inclination (in a personal discussion).

71 Itzik Manger, דמויות קרובות (*Demuyot Krovoit*), Merhavayah 1941, 19–24. Translated in: Itzik Manger, *Noente geshtaltn un andere shriftn*, Warsaw 1938.

the Hebrew press.⁷² And finally, in the 21st century, Euchel received his due recognition at this conference in his honor.

72 G. Kressel, מכתב לאיציק אייכל (*Michtav Le'Itzik Eichel*) [A Letter to Itzik Eichel], in the literary section of *Maariv*, 15 December 1961. He considers Euchel to be the founder of the Hebrew press.