

# HEBREW BELLES-LETTRES IN THE WEST

## (A Selective Revisionist Overview)

by

STANLEY NASH

*Hebrew Union College, New York*

**ABSTRACT:** This article charts a variety of trends in the contemporary study of Haskalah literature in Western and Central Europe. The focus here is on enjoyable or “playful” literature: satirical poetry and plays, travelogues, children’s literature. The scholarly approaches surveyed range from Hayyim Schirmann and Joseph Melkman’s attention to the “Sephardic” impact on Haskalah writing, Yehudah Friedlaender and Moshe Pelli’s studies of satirical plays, Shemuel Werses, Dan Miron and Chone Szmeruk’s studies of the reciprocal influences of Yiddish and Hebrew literatures, to Uriel Ofeq’s study of children’s literature. Particular attention is paid to the pioneering works of H. N. Shapira and Reuven Fahn in the thirties. Shapira’s theory of an emerging individualism and “rococo” Qohelet-like sentimentality in the movement of Hebrew literary activity from Berlin to Austria is examined and compared to Fahn’s impressions of literary developments in Vienna. A sample case-study is devoted to the Austrian Hebraist family of the Jeitteles’ who are interpreted in this study as Central European counterparts of the Italian expatriate poet in London, Efraim Luzzatto.

Several incidental remarks by Hayyim Schirmann concerning the “childlike” playfulness of the expatriate Italian-Jewish poet Efraim Luzzatto (1729–1792) in England<sup>1</sup> combine with recent studies of Haskalah satire<sup>2</sup> and Haskalah children’s literature<sup>3</sup> to provide a welcome corrective to the overly ideological bent of most studies of this literary period. Schirmann links such “peripheral” figures as the physician-poet Luzzatto and

1. H. Schirmann, 1979 (“Qantata ‘ibrit me’et Efraim Luzzatto”), II, p. 232 *et passim*.
2. Y. Friedlaender (1979); Dan Miron’s introduction to A. Halle-Wolfssohn (1977); A. Sha’anani (1975); and M. Pelli (1979a).
3. U. Ofeq (1979).

the itinerant travelogue writer Shmuel Romanelli (1757–1814) very directly to the European “center” when he writes:

The *Meassefim*<sup>4</sup> generation viewed the physician poet, as it viewed other Italian writers too (Isaac Luzzatto, Shmuel Romanelli and others) as their dream fulfilled—the perfect mixture of Hebrew and Western culture.<sup>5</sup>

It is significant that Schirmann omits the name of Moshe Hayyim Luzzatto (1707–1746), the controversial mystic and messianic figure whose authorship of allegorical dramas and a book on rhetoric have made his status as possibly “the first” *modern* Hebrew writer a vexed question for so long.<sup>6</sup> The other Luzzattos, as physicians, and Romanelli, as a proof-reader in Anton Schmid’s Vienna printing house, are so much more evidently men of the modern era. Yet they transmitted from their Italian Renaissance heritage a model of literary virtuosity—“playfulness,” if you will—and cultural synthesis which could have inspired the Maskilim of the West. Romanelli’s North African travel adventure, as titillating as a novel, went into seven editions.<sup>7</sup> Efraim Luzzatto’s poems in *’Elle boney hannō’urim*<sup>8</sup> were and are enjoyed immensely, and Luzzatto figures prominently in an epistolary style satire by Isaac Euchel (1756–1804). This satire—all but forgotten along with the fact of Efraim Luzzatto’s stature in the West—has recently received considerable scholarly attention.<sup>9</sup>

Haskalah satire, generally, has been accorded revisionist appreciation in our generation. This only helps to underscore the dimension of enjoyment and literary fancy which was ever present during the Haskalah amidst its maelstrom of emancipatory and reformative activism. The recently salvaged Hebrew original of Aaron Halle-Wolfssohn’s (1754–1835) play

4. Participants in *Hammō’assef*, the Hebrew journal which appeared (largely in Berlin) 1784–1797, 1809–1811, 1829. See Y. Klausner (1960, I, pp. 150–164).

5. Schirmann (1979, II, p. 230).

6. See, for example, Lachover (1963, I, pp. 14ff). Melkman (n.d., p. 18) notes that the Maskilim read too much into the figure of “*mehqar*” ‘research’ in M. H. Luzzatto’s “*Layyōsarim tōhilla*,” and that this was not the new science but merely conventional apologetics in defense of revealed religion.

7. See Romanelli’s “*Massa’ bō’arab*” in Romanelli (1968) and Schirmann’s monograph on Romanelli in Schirmann (1979, II, pp. 239–293).

8. I have used the second edition, E. Luzzatto (1839) and E. Luzzatto (1942). The first edition appeared in London in 1768 with only 100 copies printed.

After completing this article I came across the following pertinent debate. Friedlaender (1970) disagrees with the view of Sadan (1951, p. 7) that Efraim Luzzatto was “the father of modern Hebrew poetry.” The debate hinges on the issue of “playfulness.”

9. Euchel (1979) appeared originally in *Hammō’assef*, VI (1790). Also see n. 2 *supra*; Neiman (1975); and Pelli (1979b).

*Qallut da'at usəbi'ut*<sup>10</sup> is a hilarious delight. And although the satire of Saul Berlin (1740–1794), *Kətab Yəšer*, and Halle-Wolfssohn's *Šiha be'eres hahayyim*, both recently republished with Euchel's epistolary satire, are less uproarious but rather more subtle and scholarly in nature, they are very enjoyable indeed as belles-lettres. Yehudah Freidlaender, the editor of these satires, points to the oddity of their having been virtually ignored in the standard histories of Hebrew literature.<sup>11</sup>

We are hence led to a rather curious historiographical observation. The following factors have tended to eclipse certain more "light" and subtle literary features of the Haskalah in Western and Central Europe: 1) the overwhelming influence of Joseph Klausner's periodization;<sup>12</sup> 2) the tendency to view the short-lived efflorescence of Hebrew letters in the West as only "way-stations" en route towards the Eastern European Hebrew revival;<sup>13</sup> and 3) the inevitable slight to minor figures and minor genres in studies which focus on either cultural history or comparative literature.<sup>14</sup>

Contemporary scholars such as Shmuel Werses have contributed much—even through ostensibly dry and detailed studies—towards an appreciation of subtle belletristic features of Haskalah literature. Werses' articles on Moses Mendelssohn Hamburg's (1782–1861) *Pəney tebel* (not published until 1872) and the use therein of the *maqama* rhymed prose form, illuminates a "literary curiosity," which if it exercised no influence, is nevertheless instructive in tracing our subcurrent of "playfulness."<sup>15</sup> Similarly, Werses' analysis of Isaac Satanow's (1732–1804) use of the *mašal* (fable or aphorism),<sup>16</sup> his article on the background of the "Dialogue of the Dead" literary form,<sup>17</sup> and his brilliant studies of Yosef Perl's (1773–1839) satire<sup>18</sup> all painstakingly call attention to nuances of sophisticated belletristic enjoyment. Moreover, the entire reevaluation of Perl today—reversing the long prevalent favoritism shown towards Perl's contemporary in anti-Hasidic satire, Isaac Erter (1791–1851)—is immensely

10. *Supra*, n. 2. B. Weinryb (1955) first published it, and the Yiddish original has long been known, but Dan Miron (1977) brought it into the forefront of scholarly discussion only recently.

11. See Friedlaender (1979, p. 124).

12. See Klausner (1960).

13. Shim'on Halkin followed this approach in his influential lectures at the Hebrew University, as did Klausner.

14. This problem is endemic to Klausner, Lachover and especially Sha'an'an (1962).

15. Mendelssohn-Hamburg (1872). See Werses (1970); Govrin (1965); and Rosenbloom (1980).

16. Werses (1963). Cf. N. Rezler-Bersohn (1980).

17. Werses (1978).

18. Werses (1971), and see Werses and Szmeruk (1969).

interesting.<sup>19</sup> This revisionism, enlisting both Hebrew and Yiddish scholars, is symptomatic of our generation's penchant for charting semiotic and structural refinements and for appreciating the artistry inherent in literary inventiveness not only with "high style" but also with the vernacular. Baruch Kurzweil, in a different vein, also acclaimed Perl's subtle parody as monumental for discerning the various existential watersheds he discerns in Hebrew literature.<sup>20</sup> But probably the most productive milestone for the future visible through the Perl example are the cooperative and synthetic investigations by Hebrew and Yiddish literary scholars.<sup>21</sup> This certainly would have been impossible for the fanatic Hebrew devotee Klausner. But even for Zinberg, it appears clear that for all his comprehensiveness in studying Hebrew and Yiddish literature, "never the twain shall meet."<sup>22</sup>

No serious survey of this period should overlook the pioneering work of H. N. Shapira (1939).<sup>23</sup> Glistening through Shapira's forbidding apparatus of categorization are many pearls of literary insight which have helped to spawn the thesis of this paper. Shapira drew attention to aspects of fancifulness and "rococo" sentimentality during the first two generations of the Haskalah (1784–1829), percolating out even from its most Neoclassical centers, Berlin and Vienna.<sup>24</sup> On the fringes, Shapira found manifestations of the outright comic, inroads of "burlesque" wit and "libertine" character portrayals drawn from popular Jewish culture.<sup>25</sup> More than other scholars, Shapira analyzed breaches in what was taken for a monolithic literary pattern in Neoclassicism: sublime, orderly, rationalistic, didactic. He also approached in a more engaged manner *the texts* of such works as N. H. Wessely's (1725–1805) *Širey Tip'eret*, Shalom Cohen's (1771–1845) dramatic and poetic writing, the variegated genre of the *mašal* and a host of works on biblical themes by minor writers, which are in some cases the best, if not the only such literary analyses to this day.<sup>26</sup>

Shapira's close reading of Wessely is one example of his effort to chart the coexistence of warring polarities in Hebrew literature. On the one

19. As only one example of this favoritism for Erter, see Spiegel (1962, p. 128).

20. Kurzweil (1970).

21. See Werses and Szmerek (1969); Dan Miron's prolific work in the field; Szmerek (1978); and much more.

22. See Zinberg (1959–1971) and in English translation, Zinberg (1972–78).

23. See the new edition of Shapira (1939) printed by Masada (n.d.). All references are to the latter.

24. Shapira's book is not easy reading, but this point is made frequently and with ample clarity. See, for example, pp. 137ff., 301, 343–344 *et passim*.

25. Shapira (on Ziskind Rashkov's *Yosef və'Osnat*), p. 529ff. See also pp. 491–493.

26. The first 177 pages of Shapira's book are highly theoretical. From there on, however, his literary analyses are quite easy to follow with only an occasional need to turn back to his more theoretical statements.

hand, Wessely strove for the typologically clear and schematic model of human nature, eschewing the chameleon-like diversity of individuality in character portrayal.<sup>27</sup> But on the other hand, Wessely recognized that poetry is not pure rationalistic *mālisanut* (sophisticated versification), because one finds poetry among primitive tribes.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, Wessely writes: "The soul by its very nature prefers to speak poetically whether of good or evil."<sup>29</sup> Shapira takes pains to prove that even the iron Wessely, that dire model of the Haskalah who enjoined his compatriots in *Hammō'assep* against the frivolity of satire in belles-lettres, had a heart, as it were.<sup>30</sup> Wessely, Shapira concludes, sought to enthrone rationalism "not out of opposition to emotionalism but rather out of compromise and mediation between the two."<sup>31</sup> Moreover, the fact that the Bible served Wessely and his followers as their "Neoclassical" model is significant. The Bible, unlike European Classical models, Shapira states, contains a fund of emotionalism, and hence engenders by imitation a non-monolithic literary revival.<sup>32</sup> All of this conforms to well-attested polarities in the general culture as well—of which the labels "Appolonian" and "Dionysiac" are only the most famous pair among many—but the Hebraic world not only shares in these but has its own intrinsic dialectic and heterogeneity.<sup>33</sup>

In discussing the prolific writing of Hebrew *māšalim* (fables, aphorisms), Shapira stresses the importance of Lafontaine as representative of a playful emotional tone.<sup>34</sup> Shapira also highlights the simultaneous development of elegiac or melancholy poetry [Shlomo Pappenheim's (1740–1814) *'Aggadat 'arba'a kosot*] during the "rococo" period, which Shapira characterizes as an era of revolution and social upheaval.<sup>35</sup> Perhaps

27. See Shapira, pp. 103, 226 and see Wessely (1809) introduction.

28. Wessely (1809, p. III); Shapira (p. 100).

29. Wessely (1809, p. IIIff.); Shapira (p. 101).

30. Friedlaender (1979, p. 9) cites this famous letter of Wessely to the *Mō'assep* writers. It is from "Nahal habbasor," *Hammō'assep*, 1784. Shapira first cites Wessely's rigid insistence on 12½-beat lines with no enjambement, and then he meticulously traces Wessely's divergence from his own rigid strictures to demonstrate the veritable bursting through of emotion. See Shapira (pp. 103–105ff., 238n). Cf. Franz Delitzsch (1836, p. 175). I believe that Shapira follows the model of Ahad Ha'am who in his study of Maimonides, "Šilton haššekel," demonstrated an iron reign of reason in Maimonides, which could, nevertheless, not withstand the subconscious promptings of the emotion-laden Hebrew folk spirit.

31. Shapira (pp. 100–101).

32. Shapira (pp. 98–99).

33. Shapira (pp. 126ff). On the independence of Hebraic trends see p. 475 *et passim*.

34. Shapira (pp. 138–139).

35. On Pappenheim, see Shapira (pp. 343ff). See pp. 333ff. ("*nissaney ha'aqtu'alismus*") *et passim*. Shapira interpreted Pappenheim's work as the first failure of confidence in the omnipotence of rationalism.

following the model of the biblical poet of "decadence," Ecclesiastes, Shapira attempts to account for the coexistence of light epicurean ditties in the *māšalim* of Isaac Satanow, Joel Brill (1762–1802), Baruch Lindau (1759–1849), and even Efraim Luzzatto, with cynical, serious, and elegiac tones in other verse written by these same authors.<sup>36</sup> A memorable Qohelet-like verse of Isaac Satanow reads: "*beyt hayyayin umə'on mištaggə'im tebel*" ("The world is a tavern and an insane asylum/Its wine are its vicissitudes, and its invited guests—every creature/All living souls are its imbibers, human beings—its drinkers, idiots—its drunks, charlatans—its madmen").<sup>37</sup> Now Shemuel Werses has demurred cogently in arguing that types of *māšal* were most serious and not "playful," and that some discrimination is called for.<sup>38</sup> Nonetheless, seriousness and even militant didacticism do not diminish Shapira's contention that Satanow and the *māšal* genre generally are not purely rationalistic and Neoclassical, but rather "rococo" epicurean manifestations of a world in transition and upheaval. This trend was to intensify as Hebrew literature moved from Germany to Austria and with the onset of the Napoleonic era. How "playful" such *māšalim*, or even such propagandistic satire really was is a matter for conjecture, but I tend to agree with Shapira that here we have *bona fide* belles-lettres and not mere journalism in verse.

In this period of transition from Germany to Austria, the work of another insufficiently celebrated scholar, Reuven Fahn, is most important. Fahn, *the* historian of Austrian Hebrew literature, helps us to conceptualize the period which Shapira more intuitively appraised as a literature of cultural upheaval. If an adventurer such as Romanelli worshipped Napoleon in verse,<sup>39</sup> others such as the editors of *Bikkurey ha'ittim* in Vienna, YaSHaR (Reggio) of Gorizia (1784–1855) and Judah Jeitteles (1773–1838) did not. The latter, in particular, a member of a remarkable family in Prague, may be seen as a humanistic Jew determined to stand in the breach as an educator and creative writer in warding off decadent tendencies following the Napoleonic wars.<sup>40</sup> Judah Jeitteles' brother, Baruch Jeitteles (1762–1813), exhibits another kind of reaction to this period of social unrest, in which even the august authority of Prague's formidable rabbi, Yehezkel Landau, was put to the test. One reads in Fahn's account, in

36. Shapira (pp. 309ff.).

37. Shapira (p. 345).

38. Werses (1963, pp. 370–392).

39. Schirmann (1979, II, p. 267). And see B. Mevorach (1968) on Elyahu Halfon Halevi; Romanelli (1968); and many others.

40. R. Fahn (1937, II, pp. 135–136). On YaSHaR of Gorizia as editor of *Bikkurey ha'ittim*, see pp. 132ff. (Getzel Kressel has praised Fahn in various articles and reviews.)

Ruth KastenberG-Gladstein's study of the Prague Haskalah, and between the lines of Judah Jeitteles' fascinating book *Boney hannō'urim* (Prague, 1821), about this remarkable brother Baruch, son of the eminent physician and pioneer of enlightenment, Jonah Jeitteles, who ran away to Berlin and was induced to return only by the great rabbi himself.<sup>41</sup>

A closer look at Baruch Jeitteles reveals an intriguing polemicist and satirist whose irreverent wit and impulsiveness recalls Efraim Luzzatto and even echoes the far more distant maverick voices of Immanuel ha-Romi and Alḥarizi. The amount of material is sparse, but a monograph might reveal a highly interesting contrast between the brothers Judah and Baruch whose poems are printed side by side in *Boney hannō'urim*—but how different they are! Perhaps it is only the purest coincidence that their book received virtually the same title as Efraim Luzzatto's,<sup>42</sup> but the reader notes how—ever so curiously—Judah recalls the sentimental and elegiac tones of the Italian poet (who like their revered father Jonah was a physician), whereas Baruch recalls Luzzatto's acerbic wit. Baruch also was the author of a satire criticizing the Berlin *Hammā'assep* in which the plot (very much like that of Isaac Euchel's satire)<sup>43</sup> is set against an Italian or Sephardic background, recalling Schirmann's statement about Sephardic Jewish culture-heroes.<sup>44</sup>

We cite Baruch Jeitteles' poems here firstly because they are not studied elsewhere, and secondly because they are illustrative of a vibrant belletristic or "playful" bent indigenous to central Europe. It is also helpful to flesh out a portrait of the literary milieu in which literary geniuses such as Yosef Haefrati of Troppelowich (1770–1804) and Shelomo Löwisohn

41. Fahn (1937, II, p. 135); see also R. KastenberG-Gladstein (1965); *Boney hannō'urim* (Jeitteles, 1821) contains poems by both brothers and a biography of their father "Reb Yonah Doctor" Jeitteles.

42. Luzzatto's work was entitled *'Elle boney hannō'urim*. See *supra*, n. 8. I think the title should be translated roughly *Literary Creations of (One's) Youth* and not as Eisig Silberschlag (1973, p. 67) renders it (*These Are the Younglings*).

43. *Supra*, n. 9.

44. See KastenberG-Goldstein (1965, p. 225). For Schirmann's statement, see *supra*. Compare Efraim Luzzatto's lampooning of doctors in *'Elle boney hannō'urim*, pp. 55–58 with Baruch Jeitteles' poem in *Boney hannō'urim*, p. 148 discussed *infra*. Joseph Melkman cites Wessely's respect for the Jews of Amsterdam (n.d., pp. 14–15). Ofeq (1979, pp. 19, 21) brings documentation that education in Amsterdam was viewed as a model. Of course, this situation changed drastically during the first half of the nineteenth century. In writing to the poet Michah Yosef Levenson in Vilna on October 2, 1850, S. D. Luzzatto (1891, II, p. 1093) writes:

And how my emotions churned within me upon reading your father's poems and in recalling the status of our Jewish brethren in your land, and I reflected: Is there such a Hebrew poet in France or Holland?

(1789–1821) emerged, and that certain stereotypes of central Europe as an artistic wasteland or passive offshoot of Berlin—Hebraically speaking—do not go unchallenged.<sup>45</sup>

The first half of *Bəney hannə'urim* is a biographical tribute to the father of Judah and Baruch, Jonah Jeitteles who embodied the ideal amalgam as “a human being, a learned person and a physician.”<sup>46</sup> There is tremendous esteem here for the deeply sentimental and pious friend of Rabbi Yehezkel Landau, and this contrasts ever so starkly with the pungently caustic tone of Baruch's verse. Baruch, despite his rambunctious nature was evidently deeply respectful of his father's work and personality, yet his poems are a study in contrasts. The biography describes in detail Jonah Jeitteles' implementation of an intensive inoculation program in which Baruch assisted him greatly—perhaps even serving as a guinea pig. This largely successful medical effort resulted in the tragic death of the physician's daughter and his own subsequent melancholy, illness and death—all meticulously detailed.<sup>47</sup>

In view of Baruch's closeness to his father as a medical practitioner, and his own setting up of hospitals for casualties of the wars,<sup>47a</sup> it is amusing to read his dialogue concerning an incompetent doctor. The doctor demands to know which of his patients have ever said anything bad against him. His friend replies: “In all my days my ear caught not the slightest wind of it (a complaint)/For how can they testify against you when they are in . . . the grave.”<sup>48</sup> Similarly, the learned physician Jonah is quoted as having presented a lengthy scholarly exposition on the wholesome nature and benefits of matrimony.<sup>48a</sup> In the most bitterly jarring contrast to his father's sentimentalism, Baruch recites verse upon verse to the discredit of women and wives, which are the equal of any misogynous literature. In reflecting why bees never seem to quarrel, he comments that “bees have no wives at all.”<sup>49</sup> Another poem entitled “The Difference” reaches a high level of acerbic virtuosity in describing how the mature “woman” differs from the “young maiden.”<sup>50</sup> Worthy of mention also is his mock

45. Silberschlag (1973) is certainly guilty of this. But even Klausner (1960) gives this impression, perhaps unintentionally. Shapira, while he studies the Austrian literature in depth, repeatedly describes it as an extension of the Berlin Haskalah. See G. Shaked (1968), and U. Shavit (1978).

46. *Bəney hannə'urim*, p. 86.

47. *Ibid.*, pp. 66–79.

47a. G. Kressel (1967, II, p. 75).

48. *Bəney hannə'urim*, p. 148.

48a. *Ibid.*, pp. 34–39.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 111.

50. *Ibid.*, pp. 147–148.



testimonial for a peaceful couple who have had twenty years of marital bliss and can expect much more. Where does this exemplary married pair reside?—in the grave.<sup>51</sup>

In a wonderful fable entitled “The Little Dog and the Cat,” Jeitteles pokes fun at the literary critic who eagerly lashes out against authors “so that they may only know that I too have ability . . . to bark.”<sup>52</sup> Of a certain author who left a codicil that his works be published only after his death, Baruch prays: “Would that your years be as long as Methuselah’s.”<sup>53</sup> And commenting on the then hotly debated issue as to whether burial of the dead should not be delayed to prevent tragic mistakes, Baruch expresses greater worry over the much larger number of people who “are alive in the eyes of those who behold them, whereas they . . . are dead.”<sup>54</sup> Finally, to conclude our description of this latter-day Qohelet, we may note his acid comment on the bliss of stupid people:

You are an ass, and an ass has no enemies  
 If you gain wisdom, you gain hatred  
 If you gain knowledge, you gain envy  
 But a fool and an ignoramus sit placidly in the verdant shade.<sup>55</sup>

Shapira does not mention Baruch Jeitteles nor—oddly—does he even discuss the manifestations of satire at all, except as an incidental outgrowth of the *mašal*.<sup>55a</sup> Shapira’s scheme more likely anticipated the emergence of such authors as the sentimental Judah Jeitteles. Yet there is something provocative to his theory that, as the Haskalah moved from Germany to Austria, it increased in individualism and emotionalism. It did so, he claimed, partially under the influence of Rousseau, but also as part of an inner-Jewish dynamic traceable to the Bible.

Whether Shapira’s Europe-centered theory is true, or whether we accept the dissenting view of the Dutch scholar Melkman that Shapira is too “chauvinistic” in relegating the influence of the Sephardic Hebrew tradition to the “periphery,”<sup>56</sup> it is fascinating to find the brothers Jeitteles in Austria identifying in some obvious ways with the Italian Efraim Luz-

51. *Ibid.*, p. 135.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 98.

53. *Ibid.*, p. 114.

54. *Ibid.*, p. 112.

55. *Ibid.*, pp. 103–104.

55a. Shapira cites the *mašal* just noted, for instance, as part of his general survey of “*nissaney ha'aqtu'alismus*” (‘buddings of reality-oriented literature’). See Shapira (p. 337). This *mašal* appeared originally under the pseudonym “Y.-R. Hannirdap” (‘The Persecuted One’) in *Hammō'assep*, Ab, 1784, p. 211 (Letteris’ edition).

56. Melkman (n.d., pp. 138–139) and also (pp. 122–123).

zatto. It is fascinating also to find this aggressive literary virtuosity in these brothers who were both activists in vastly different ways: the one an "establishment" type, an editor and educator; the other a charismatic maverick.

Similarly, it is thoroughly intriguing to compare the synoptic characterizations of the movement of Hebrew literary activity from Berlin to Vienna in such totally different but equally prodigious scholars, Shapira and Fahn. Shapira writes of the era of transition:

Life was jarred. The sublimeness abated, and instead of pathetic seriousness there came a colorful lightness.<sup>56a</sup>

And Fahn, in comparing the two centers of Haskalah, writes: "There (in Berlin) men of the book preached it, whereas here (in Vienna) men of action used it."<sup>57</sup>

Pivoting on Fahn's characterization, and attempting to enrich our view of Haskalah belles-lettres, we now turn to Uriel Ofeq's masterful study of children's literature<sup>57a</sup> for an exciting new slant on Haskalah writing for the sake of enjoyment. Enjoyment is the key to literary revival, as Shemuel David Luzzatto noted already in his 1825 introduction to *Kinnor na'im*.<sup>58</sup> As Shemuel David grew older, he may have perhaps become more bookish and lost patience with the audacious poet hero of his youth Efraim Luzzatto,<sup>58a</sup> but as a young man, he had put his finger on the heart of the matter. Through Ofeq's study one senses the pulse of an effort to engage the fancy of young people. This effort began already in the Berlin Haskalah. Fahn's above-cited generalization, therefore, is not quite correct, unless one reads it as a degree of emphasis in moving from the theoretical to the practical. Another comment by Fahn helps to rectify the picture, even from the perspective of Fahn's great enthusiasm for the prodigious activity in Hebrew printing carried out primarily in Vienna.<sup>59</sup> Fahn writes concerning parallel institutions in Berlin and Vienna:

The teacher and the proofreader were the inculcators of the Hebrew language . . . . The modus operandi of each differed . . . . The one stood face to face in life's arena where forces wrestle and collide. The other [was] as if hidden amidst the excavations, directing his arrows from there. But each complemented the other.<sup>60</sup>

56a. Shapira (p. 361).

57. Fahn (1937, II, p. 144).

57a. Ofeq (1979).

58. S. D. Luzzatto (1825, p. ix).

58a. Schirmann (1979, II, p. 231).

59. Fahn (1937, II, pp. 147ff., 165ff.) details the contributions of each proofreader who came to work in the Schmid press.

60. *Ibid.*, p. 147.

Something of Fahn's enthusiasm for the teacher and the printed textbook permeates Ofeq's study. The full range of the energy, commitment and versatility of such authors as Halle-Wolfssohn and Shalom Hacoheh becomes evident once we examine this hitherto neglected facet of their creativity. Wolfssohn, the author of both an elitist satire for the erudite and of a burlesque comedy à la Moliere, was also the author of the first anthology of children's literature *'Abtalion* (Prague, 1806).<sup>61</sup> Hacoheh, a more sedate type than Wolfssohn and very similar to his successor in *Bikkurey ha'ittim*, Judah Jeitteles, figures prominently in our study. Shapira convincingly appraises Hacoheh as a pivotal author who, in a very real sense, brought Wessely's brave beginnings in neo-biblical poetry "down to earth."<sup>62</sup> Hacoheh depicted the first Jewish girl in Hebrew letters in his *'Amal va'Tirsa*.<sup>63</sup> Hacoheh's *David* is no longer the aloof Neoclassical king but the shepherd singer of Israel.<sup>64</sup> With Hacoheh's character portrayals we move into a world of romance, legend, dark irrational forces, a world which engages our human interest even as it ennobles our vision.<sup>65</sup>

Ofeq helps us to see that Hacoheh's literary career should be viewed as an educational endeavor aimed at the hearts of children,<sup>66</sup> or as we might put it, as literature unpretentiously styled for enjoyment and edification. How wrong the cavalier dismissals of Hacoheh's stature appear<sup>67</sup> when we read Ofeq's analysis of such facts as the reprinting of Hacoheh's epistolary *Katab Yošer* in fourteen editions!<sup>68</sup> If we combine this with Shapira's view that Hacoheh's "pastoralism" served as a necessary springboard to Shelomo Löwisohn's "Promethean" *Sturm und Drang*,<sup>69</sup> we are doubly reminded that it is time to reread Haskalah literature from new perspectives.

Ofeq, like many scholars, celebrates as a bellwether those authors who innovated the use of rabbinic Hebrew and broke away from the stilted Neoclassical Biblicism of the first *Mə'assəpim*. Scholars become exercised over this subject. Melkman claims the more malleable synthetic Hebrew as a Sephardic contribution.<sup>70</sup> Werses finds neo-rabbinic stylistic pioneer-

61. Ofeq (1979, pp. 28–37).

62. One of Shapira's major ideological categories is "terre'aliut" ('earthliness').

63. Shapira (p. 386). And see Hacoheh (1862).

64. Shapira (pp. 389–390). And see Hacoheh (1834).

65. Shapira (pp. 391–394).

66. Ofeq (1979, pp. 66–67).

67. For example, Sha'anani (1962, I, p. 102) is perplexed over the popularity of *Nir David* in its time. Silberschlag (1973, pp. 93–94) dismisses not only Hacoheh's talent but his faith in the Hebrew language as well.

68. Ofeq (1979, pp. 75ff.) points out that this epistolary is at the same time "a story in letters."

69. Shapira (p. 476).

70. Melkman (n.d., p. 16) points out that for Sephardic Jews there was not the same intense need to return to the Bible exclusively as a vehicle for rejecting rabbinism.

ing at once in Satanow's "Commentary" to his *Mišley 'Asap*<sup>71</sup> and at the same time in the heroic efforts of Mendel Lefin, in Nahman of Bratslav and in Yosef Perl.<sup>72</sup> Ofeq concentrates his enthusiasm on the Berlin virtuoso Y. L. Ben-Ze'ev (1764–1811), who created prodigiously in the areas of the *mašal*, grammar and more. In Ben-Ze'ev's multifaceted approach to the revival of Hebrew, he not only used every linguistic recourse including rabbinic Hebrew, but he put his pen to a lengthy pornographic poem, reflecting, Ofeq speculates, Ben-Ze'ev's "subconscious wish" to prove that Hebrew could be the vehicle of everyday secular experience.<sup>73</sup>

A veritably exciting chapter of Ofeq's work deals with the universally underrated David Zamosc (1700–1772) and his prodigious translations of travel and adventure literature.<sup>74</sup> Once again we are reminded that these works were widely read for enjoyment, as was Shemuel Romanelli's above-mentioned travelogue. A cursory look at the memoirs and monographs dealing with hundreds of Hebraists would probably reveal a preponderance of "light" or "playful" reading going back to the Berlin Haskalah and beyond it to the medieval travelers, rhymsters, satirists and tellers of fantastic tales.<sup>75</sup>

In bringing this survey to a close, we are again assisted by Shapira's highly stimulating categories in positing that Hebrew Haskalah literature appropriated biblical paradigms and aristocratic Hebrew locutions in moving between the "Promethean" and the "burlesque."<sup>76</sup> Shapira and virtually all students of the literature have underplayed the latter, but recent scholarly trends are likely to uncover more "breaches" in the wall of stiff Neoclassicism, more "incursions" of Sephardic levity, more scintillating refinements of Galician Jewish wit, and more of the "playful" Jewish sense of humor that could not have been the province of the "folk culture" alone.

71. See Werses (1963, pp. 370ff.).

72. Ofeq (1979, pp. 37ff.).

73. This poem was published in a bibliophile edition by Getzel Kressel in 1977. I read a copy of it in the Brandeis University library, and it is very much "hard core" pornography.

74. Ofeq (1979, pp. 79–97).

75. See, for example, Yosef Klausner's (1960) detailed reading lists of childhood favorites in virtually every one of his monographs.

76. Shapira develops the category of "Promethean" dynamism in pursuit of beauty rather than Neoclassical Wisdom in his section on Shelomo Löwisohn, pp. 462–468ff. He uses the term "burlesque" in discussing folkloristic incursions on "the fringes" (*supra*, n. 25).

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