

**Shaping the Jewish Enlightenment: Solomon Dubno (1738-1813), an  
Eastern European Maskil**

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I, Zuzanna Krzemien, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own.  
Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has  
been indicated in the thesis.

## Abstract

This thesis concerns the life and literary output of Solomon ben Yoel Dubno (1738–1813), a Polish-Jewish grammarian and poet who was active in Amsterdam and Berlin. He became renowned for his work with Moses Mendelssohn on *Sefer netivot ha-shalom* (also known as Biur), a German translation of the Pentateuch, which was accompanied by a commentary in Hebrew and Masoretic emendations.

The thesis aims at recognising the understudied role that Eastern-European Jews played in the literature of the early Jewish Enlightenment (Haskalah). It adopts the literary and scholarly works of Solomon Dubno as a case study. Despite the fact that he was a key contributor to one of the signature publications of the early German Haskalah, *Sefer netivot ha-shalom*, he has been, to a great extent, ignored by the academic scholarship.

The thesis begins with an analysis of the background and goals of the Jewish Enlightenment, the role of Eastern-European Jews in shaping the Haskalah, as well as the frameworks within which historians have perceived Dubno's work. Next, it examines the contents of Dubno's private library, which were published as a booklist in 1771 and in a public auction catalogue in 1814, and interprets them as an 'intellectual map' of a Polish maskil who moved to Western Europe. Subsequently, it discusses Dubno's work on the biblical commentary and his correspondence with Mendelssohn regarding the publication of the Biur. Dubno's linguistic worldview is presented from a number of perspectives, starting from his approach towards Hebrew as a Jewish cultural legacy and the holy tongue, and ending in his emphasis on the importance of studying grammar and preserving

the purity of the Hebrew language. Finally, the thesis analyses poems and belles-lettres that Dubno composed in Hebrew to demonstrate that this language was still appropriate for artistic expression.

## Impact statement

This study is devoted to analysing the scholarly and literary output of Solomon Dubno (1738–1813). He was an Eastern-European Jew, who was active in Amsterdam and Berlin, and played an important role in the early Haskalah movement through his work; a commentary on Mendelssohn's Pentateuch translation and poetry. His literary and scholarly compositions have not been the subject of systematic research until now, and this thesis is an attempt to shed more light on his participation in the Jewish Enlightenment.

The thesis aims at deepening the understanding of the process of writing Mendelssohn's Pentateuch translation and the commentary on it. Furthermore, it attempts to contribute to the analysis of the attitudes of 18<sup>th</sup>-century Eastern-European Jews towards the study of Hebrew grammar, the translation of sacred scriptures, and new Bible commentaries. On a more general level, it aims at enhancing the understanding of their participation in the early Jewish Enlightenment. The study has been based on both published and unpublished works by Dubno, thus making known the content of his compositions that have been preserved only in a manuscript form. For these reasons, this study might be beneficial to researchers who deal with the early Jewish Enlightenment and the cultural exchanges between Eastern and Western-European Jews in the 18th century.

The outputs of this study have been disseminated through presentations given at the Institute of Historical Research, UCL, and seminars at the Posen Society of Fellows. An article about Dubno was published in *New Perspectives on Modern Jewish History* (De Gruyter, 2018) and it will be, hopefully, followed

by other publications. This thesis is just a small contribution toward the scholarship on the role of Eastern-European Jews in shaping the early Jewish Enlightenment in general, and the German Haskalah in particular, a subject that still awaits a broad, comparative analysis.

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Any inadequacies that may appear in this work are entirely my responsibility.

## **A note on the presentation of source materials**

Biblical quotations are cited from *The Authorized King James Version* (Oxford University Press, 1998) and modified whenever necessary.

The transliteration of Hebrew follows the Library of Congress' Romanisation system, with the following exceptions: there is no distinction between *alef* and *ayin*, *tet* and *tav*, *kaf* and *kuf*, *samekh* and *sin*. The consonant vav is represented by *v*. Tsere is transcribed as *e*.

Published English translations have been reproduced wherever possible. All other translations of the sources are my own, and the original Hebrew text appears in the footnotes.

## Introduction

### **The Eastern-European participation in the Jewish Enlightenment - the lessons of one life**

Solomon ben Yoel Dubno (1738 - 1813) was a Jewish scholar and preeminent representative of the early Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment) who cultivated both religious learning and knowledge of sciences.<sup>1</sup> Although a leading contributor to the most important projects of the German Jewish Enlightenment, the Bible translation and commentary (Hebr. *Bi'ur*), Dubno has been almost entirely overlooked by historians of the Haskalah. Many of his poems, essays and letters remain unpublished, and for that reason, a large part of this study is based on manuscripts. The analysis of the collected material will reveal the work of Dubno, an Eastern-European religious Jew, as an integral part of the eighteenth-century Jewish Enlightenment, which, in this study, is interpreted as encompassing a continuum of different responses to such phenomena as the development of secular Hebrew, emancipation, knowledge explosion, etc. In this way, the Haskalah is seen as an intellectual movement pertaining to the Diaspora in Europe, whose nuances change depending on the exact time and location.<sup>2</sup> In this way, this dissertation departs from the Germanocentric view of the Jewish Enlightenment and argues for a broader definition of the Haskalah, in which the

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<sup>1</sup> Note that the term “science” was not in use until 1830s. In Dubno’s lifetime, it would be referred to as “natural philosophy” or labelled under “foreign branches of knowledge” (*hokhmat hitsoniyot*). Sydney Ross “Scientist: The Story of a Word”, *Annals of Science* 18.2 (1962), 65-85.

<sup>2</sup> Andrea Schatz, “Peoples Pure of Speech’: The Religious, the Secular, and Jewish Beginnings of Modernity”, Dan Diner (ed.), *Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook VI* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), 169-187.

goals of the Berlin Jewish Enlightenment are not used as a yardstick for the assessment of other kinds of the Haskalah. Furthermore, it proposes seeing the German Jewish Enlightenment as a product of different Jewish intellectuals, many of whom were not German Jews and espoused views that contradicted with the more radical members of the Berlin maskilim.

The Haskalah developed in the eighteenth century in numerous locations in both Eastern and Western Europe. The term “Jewish Enlightenment” can be misleading, and one should be cautious not to perceive the goals of the Haskalah as synonymous with the principles of the Enlightenment, a philosophical movement that dominated European intellectual circles in the eighteenth century.<sup>3</sup> Even the meaning of the name “Haskalah” does not exactly correspond to its non-Jewish counterparts such as “Enlightenment”, “Aufklärung”, or “Lumières,” as it can be derived from the word “*sekhef*” (reason), and the verb “*lehaskil*”, which was used in medieval times to denote the process of learning, has no connotation of light.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, the Haskalah shared many ideas with the Enlightenment, and both of these movements advocated to some extent the ideas of rationalism, tolerance, liberty, secularism and scientific inquiry. The desire to learn was not conceived of as just a means to self-improvement, but it also had a wider social dimension, as it carried the potential of benefiting society and the betterment of the human condition in general.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Jeremy Dauber, *Antonio's Devils: Writers of the Jewish Enlightenment and the Birth of Modern Hebrew and Yiddish Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 27.

<sup>4</sup> Andrea Schatz, *Sprache in der Zerstreung: Die Säkularisierung des Hebräischen im 18. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), 281, n. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Dorinda Outram, *The Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 1-9.

Some scholars trace back the first signposts of the Haskalah to the seventeenth century court Jews, such as Samuel Oppenheimer (1630-1703), Moses Benjamin Wulff (1661-1729), or Moses Levin Gomperz (c.1686 - 1762) who, thanks to their privileged position of influential merchants and entrepreneurs, functioned in the realms of both the Christian and the Jewish world, and were inclined to adopt elements of non-Jewish culture. A century later, the character of the financial Jewish elite was marked by an accelerated process of acculturation. Rich men would provide their children with an increasingly secular education encompassing modern languages and general subjects, which would enable them to succeed in Gentile high society.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, many of them undertook philanthropic projects aiming at the improvement of the living conditions and education of the Jewish population, while also supporting financially Jewish scholars and authors who popularised the ideas of the Enlightenment.

The Haskalah movement aimed to invigorate the use of the Hebrew language, to spread knowledge of the natural sciences among the Jewish population, and to improve the social status of its members in Gentile society.<sup>7</sup> In its early stages, it did not constitute an organised movement, and its members

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<sup>6</sup> Murray Jay Rosman, *The Lords' Jews: Magnate-Jewish Relations in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth During the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Center for Jewish Studies, Harvard University; Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 1990); Selma Stern-Taeubler, "The First Generation of Emancipated Jews," *The Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 15.1 (1970), 3-9; Selma Stern-Taeubler, *The Court Jew, A Contribution to the History of the Period of Absolutism in Central Europe* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1950); Francis Ludwig Carsten, "The Court Jews: A Prelude to Emancipation," *The Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 3.1 (1958), 140-156.

<sup>7</sup> Moshe Pelli, *Haskalah and Beyond: The Reception of the Hebrew Enlightenment and the Emergence of Haskalah Judaism* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2010), 9-10.

included such diverse individuals as self-taught scholars, university-educated doctors and rabbis. Those who followed the Jewish Enlightenment principles exhibited different levels of involvement in literary and social activities, as well as various degrees of attachment to the traditional lifestyle.<sup>8</sup> Many of its followers, such as Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786), Isaac Satanow (1733-1805) or Solomon Dubno, combined Enlightenment values with religious observance.

### **A Jewish scholar's life between Volhynia, Berlin, and Amsterdam**

Solomon Dubno was born in Dubno, Volhynia, an important centre of Jewish life in Eastern Europe of that time. The earliest evidence of Jewish presence in Volhynia, dating from 1288, is a reference to the Jews mourning over the death of Vladimir Vasilkovich, the prince of Volhynia. The size of the Jewish population remained negligible until the end of the Middle Ages, when, between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, the number of Jewish settlements rose from three to twenty-two.<sup>9</sup> While most of the Jewish population sustained itself by commerce, inn-keeping and craftsmanship, the region was also home to such eminent scholars as Solomon Luria (1510 – 1573), who held a rabbinical post in Ostrog, Rabbis Isaac ben Bezalel (d. 1576) and Yom Tov Lipmann Heller (1579 - 1654), both living in Ludmir, Mordecai ben Abraham Jaffe (1530 - 1612), who was appointed rabbi in Kremenets, Samuel Eliezer ben Judah ha-Levi Edels (1555 – 1631), rabbi and head of the *yeshivah* of Ostrog, and David ben Samuel ha-Levi

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<sup>8</sup> David Sorkin, *The Berlin Haskalah and German Religious Thought. Orphans of Knowledge* (London and Portland, Oreg.: Vallentine Mitchell, 2000), 62.

<sup>9</sup> Bernard Dov Weinryb, *The Jews of Poland. A Social and Economic History of the Jewish Community in Poland from 1100 to 1800* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1973), 31.

Segal (c. 1586 – 1667), rabbi of Ostrog and later *av bet din* in Lviv. From 1580 to 1764 the region constituted one of the provinces of the Council of the Four Lands. The fate of its thriving community changed abruptly as a result of the pogroms associated with the Chmielnicki Uprising of 1648-1649, when the Jewish population decreased from 16,000 to 8,000.<sup>10</sup> But following a period of rehabilitation and recovery, its numbers rapidly rose again, so that by the mid eighteenth century, according to the 1765 census, there were 51,736 Jewish inhabitants in 116 settlements throughout Volhynia.<sup>11</sup> The population suffered losses again with the outbreak of a Cossack rebellion in 1702, and the Swedish invasion of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth during the Great Northern War. In addition, a number of blood libel accusations against the Jews occurred in the region in the course of the eighteenth century (in Zaslavl in 1747, in Kremenets in 1755, in Yampol in 1756), and between 1734 and 1768, several rebellions by the Haidamacks (Cossack paramilitary groups) were accompanied by pogroms directed at the local Jewry.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, all this did not hinder the growth of the Jewish population; by 1838 there were about 195,000 Jews living in Volhynia, who constituted 6.7% of the 1,314,000 total population of the region.<sup>13</sup>

The town of Dubno is situated on the banks of the Ikva River. From the fourteenth century on, it belonged to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and in 1569 it became part of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, acquiring the status of a

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<sup>10</sup> Shaul Stampfer, “What Actually Happened to the Jews of Ukraine in 1648?,” *Jewish History* 17.2 (2003), 214-218.

<sup>11</sup> “Ukraina. Evrei na teritorii Ukrainy do kontsa 18 vieka” in: Ella Slivkina (ed.) *Kratkaia evreiskaia entsiklopediia* (Jerusalem: 1996), vol. 8, 1170–1187.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Oleksandr Haiman, *Istoria evreiv Ukraini* (Kiev: Akademia Istorii ta kulturi evreiv Ukraini im. Shimona Dubnova, 2003), 465.



city in 1498. It was ruled by the Ostrogski family from the fourteenth century until 1619, when after the death of the last member of the line it was passed to the house of Zaslavski. In 1758, twenty years after Solomon Dubno's birth, the town was taken over by the Lubomirski family.<sup>14</sup>

The first reference to a Jewish community of Dubno comes from 1532, and the first Jewish tombstone - from 1581. Before the onset of the Chmielnicki uprising, Dubno's Jewish population amounted to about 350 people living in 58 households. As a result of pogroms, by 1650 the number of Jewish homes dropped to 47, rising again, in 1662, to 625, and in 1765 to 1,923, inhabiting 170 houses.<sup>15</sup>

At the end of the eighteenth century, Dubno became the largest Jewish settlement in Volhynia. The town was known among Jews as *Dubno rabati* ("the great Dubno"), a name which reveals its significance for the local Jewish community.<sup>16</sup> The town went through a period of intense development after Solomon Dubno had left it for Western Europe. Following the first partition of Poland in 1772, the great fair, until then held in Lviv, was relocated to Dubno. This resulted in the accelerated development of the local Jewish community,<sup>17</sup> whose membership increased to 2,325 between 1770 and 1790.<sup>18</sup> In 1794, the Great Synagogue of Dubno was erected, and the town was home to three Jewish

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<sup>14</sup> Ignacy Radliński, "Dubno" in: Filip Sulimierski; Bronisław Chlebowski; Władysław Walewski (eds), *Słownik geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego i innych krajów słowiańskich* (Warszawa: Filip Sulimierski; Władysław Walewski, 1881), vol. 2, 194-197.

<sup>15</sup> Benyamin Lukin, "Dubno" in: Gershon Hundert (ed.) *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe* (Yale University Press, 2008), vol. 1, 432; "Dubno", *Kratkaia evreskaia entsiklopedia* (Jerusalem: 1982), vol. 2, 385–386. To learn more about the pogroms in Dubno during the Chmielnicki uprising, see: Moshe Rosman, "Dubno in the Wake of Khmel'Nyts'kyi", *Jewish History* 17.2 (2003), 239-255.

<sup>16</sup> Lukin, "Dubno", 432.

<sup>17</sup> Shmuel Ettinger, "Volhynia" in: *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (2007), vol. 20, 570-573.

<sup>18</sup> Haiman, *Istoria evreiv Ukraini*, 485.

printing houses,<sup>19</sup> and a year later, the whole province, including Dubno, was annexed by the Russian Empire. One of the most renowned inhabitants of Dubno during this period was Jacob ben Wolf Kranz (1741–1804), a preacher who became known as the Dubno Magid.<sup>20</sup>

Very little is known of Solomon Dubno's personal life. He married the daughter of Simha ben Joshua Haas of Zloczow (1711-1768), the author of two books of moral instruction couched in kabbalistic terms, *Lev simḥah* (Zolkiew, 1757) and *Neti'ah shel simḥah* (Zolkiew, 1763), as well as an account of his journey to the Holy Land, *Ahavat tsiyon* (Grodno, 1790).<sup>21</sup> He had one son, Abraham Moses, and it is unknown whether beside him Dubno had any other children.<sup>22</sup> In Dubno he met for the first time Saul Lowenstam (1717-1790), who would become the rabbi of Amsterdam in 1755. He pursued his rabbinical education in Dubno under the tutelage of Naphtali Herz (d. 1777),<sup>23</sup> and, possibly, at an uncertain location, under Solomon Chelm (1717-1781), before emigrating westward in order to develop his other scholarly interests.<sup>24</sup> While Naphtali Herz,

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<sup>19</sup> Lukin, "Dubno", 432.

<sup>20</sup> To find out more about Jacob Kranz see: Israel Bettan, "The Dubno Maggid", *Hebrew Union College Annual* 23.2 (1950-1951), *Hebrew Union College Seventy-Fifth Anniversary Publication 1875-1950*, 267-293.

<sup>21</sup> Gershom Scholem, *The Latest Phase. Essays on Hasidim by Gershom Scholem*, edited by David Assaf and Esther Liebes (Jerusalem: Am Oved Publishers, The Hebrew University Magnet Press, 2008) (Heb.), 177. For more information about *Ahavat Tsiyon*, see the subsection "Works wrongly attributed to Dubno" in the chapter "Dubno's poetry and belles-lettres."

<sup>22</sup> Julius Fürst (ed.), *Der Orient. Berichte, Studien und Kritiken für jüdische Geschichte und Literatur* (Leipzig: 1847), vol. 8, 178-179; GSJ, vol. 16, letter no. 237.

<sup>23</sup> Benjamin Hirsch Auerbach, *Geschichte der Israelitischen Gemeinde Halberstadt* (Halberstadt: Meyer, 1866), 179.

<sup>24</sup> It is uncertain where and at what time Dubno was Chelm's disciple, if at all. While no evidence of that has been preserved, Dubno indeed knew Chelm personally and published his *Sha'are ne'imah*. Some scholars claim, without giving any references, that Dubno was Chelm's pupil in Lviv. See: Alexander Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn: A Biographical Study* (London: Littman Library Of Jewish Civilisation, 1998), 354; "Dubno, Solomon ben Joel" in: *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 6, 34. Scholem confirms that Dubno

is known as a conservative rabbi, Solomon Chelm is renowned for his explicit support of the study of philosophy, mathematics and science. However, it seems that he could not have been the person who directed Dubno's interests towards the Haskalah, as Dubno was an adult when he met him, an intellectually mature individual who was already enthused by the study of Hebrew grammar. Chelm's own account of Dubno seems to confirm this assumption:<sup>25</sup>

“The great Torah scholar and excellent grammarian, our teacher and Rabbi Solomon, son of our teacher and Rabbi Yoel of Dubno Rabati, copied with his own hand the book *Sha'are Ne'imah*, which I composed in my youth, as [I] explained in the introduction to my *Mirkevet ha-Mishneh*. He came to me and asked for permission to publish this work. Since it was still poorly organised, I spent a week on it and put it in good order. The above-mentioned our teacher and Rabbi Solomon helped me to look for the most precise wordings until the text was sifted like fine flour (Kidushin 69b), and now I have allowed this respectable man to take the above-mentioned book to the printing press.”

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was Chelm's disciple in Lviv, approximately in the years 1759/60-1764/65. See: Scholem, *The Latest Phase*, 177. However, according to others, Solomon Chelm gained his first rabbinical position in Chelm, then moved on to Zamosc in 1767, and came to Lviv only in 1771. See: “Chelm, Solomon ben Moses”, *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 4, 589; Rehav Rubin, “Hug ha-'areṣ by Rabbi Solomon of Chelm: An Early Geographical Treatise and Its Sources”, *Aleph* 8 (2008), 135-136. This would mean that Dubno could not have been his student in Lviv at that time, as he published Chelm's *Sha'are ne'imah* in Frankfurt-on-Oder in 1766 and moved to Amsterdam in 1767. Dubno might have studied under Solomon Chelm in Chelm, and it is not certain who was his teacher in Lviv, if he had studied there at all.

<sup>25</sup> Chelm, *Sha'are ne'imah*, 1 (unpaginated).

“התורני המופלא והמופלג המדקדק הנחמד מוהר"ר שלמה במוהר"ר יואל מדובנא רבתי היה בידו העתק מספר שערי נעימה אשר חברתו בילדותי כמבואר בהקדמת ספר מרכבת המשנה שלי. בא אלי ובקש מאתי שאתן לו רשות להדפיס המחברת הלז ולהיות שעדיין לא היה מסודר כראוי פניתי עצמי לזה משך שבוע וסדרתיו באופן נאה והרבני מוהר"ר שלמה הנ"ל סייע לי בחיפוש מחופש מנוסחהות הרבה המדוייקות עד שע"י כך יצא מגופה כסלת נקיה וכעת האיש הנכבד הלז מורשה מאתי להביא למכבש הדפוס הספר הנ"ל (...).”

One can assume, therefore, that it was Dubno's own inclination to self-study, or perhaps the influence of other scholars unknown to us, that resulted in his emigration to the West. As Dubno was interested in grammar by the time he met Chelm, and since he composed a laudatory poem for his book, it appears as though during his life in the Commonwealth of Poland he invested time in the study of subjects that were at odds with the rabbinical curriculum, and his stay in Amsterdam and Berlin only enabled him to develop his existing interests rather than acquire new ones. It was Dubno's encounter with Chelm that prompted his departure for Western Europe, where he published Chelm's *Sha'are ne'imah* [Gates of Melody], a work on accentuation in the books of Job, Proverbs and Psalms and the rules guiding the transformation of disjunctive accents into conjunctive ones.<sup>26</sup> From the introduction to the book we learn that Dubno had traveled from one land to another in search of a publisher, until he arrived in Frankfurt an der Oder, where the local rabbi, Gershon, provided him with his *haskamah* which emphasised the importance of the publication, as it explained the forgotten rules of cantillation. In his own preface to the book, Solomon Chelm said that he composed it in his youth, and that after Dubno had read it, and expressed his regret that it remained unknown, he convinced Chelm to have it published. Dubno helped him reorganise and edit the material, and only then was given his permission to print it, which he did twice: in 1766 in Frankfurt an der Oder and in 1776 in Frankfurt am Main.

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<sup>26</sup> See n. 23. See also: Zvi Betzer, "Accents and Masora in Rabbinic Responsa," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 91.1/2 (Jul. - Oct., 2000), 2.

Dubno was one of many early modern Eastern-European Jews who moved to Western Europe. Such migrants were motivated to travel abroad by the growing impoverishment of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the hostility of its inhabitants towards Jews, as well as by the desire to live in a materially and culturally more advanced society.<sup>27</sup> The intensity of traditional Jewish learning and the thoroughness in the study of Hebrew and the religious texts written in that language offered many Eastern-European Jewish scholars an opportunity to find positions as teachers or communal officers in Jewish communities in central and Western Europe where, under the impact of the Reformation and the Thirty Years' War, the institution of the *yeshivah* was in decline,<sup>28</sup> and consequently, Jews with in-depth religious education were much sought after. In their new contexts, Polish immigrant scholars excelled in the interpretation of sacred scriptures and invigorated the active use of Hebrew. Their immigration was encouraged especially by the demand for religious teachers in the German Jewish communities, whose needs for traditional education were not being met. From the mid-sixteenth century on, it became common for German Jews to travel eastwards in order to study at one of the Polish Talmudic schools,<sup>29</sup> and since the middle of the seventeenth century, following the mass emigration of Polish Jews as a result of the Chmielnicki Uprising, Jewish children in Germany

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<sup>27</sup> Moses A. Shulvass, *From East to West. The Westward Migration of Jews from Eastern Europe during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1971), 15.

<sup>28</sup> Jay R. Berkovitz, "Jewish Law and Ritual in Early Modern Germany" in: Dean Phillip Bell and Stephen G. Burnett (eds), *Jews, Judaism, and the Reformation in Sixteenth-Century Germany* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 485-486.

<sup>29</sup> Israel Bartal, *The Jews of Eastern Europe, 1772-1881* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 17-18.

were commonly tutored by Polish scholars.<sup>30</sup> In most cases, a Jewish tutor would be required to teach for a relatively small number of hours per day, which left him a considerable amount of time for his own studies and scholarly work. Nevertheless, his income was often unstable, and the job attracted little respect.<sup>31</sup> Tutors were accorded a rather low status in the social hierarchy, comparable to that of domestic servants.<sup>32</sup> The maskilim denounced their obsolete methods of teaching, as well as their poor command of German and use of Yiddish as the language of instruction.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, since only a small number of *yeshivot* (religious schools) was operating in the German states at the time, Polish schoolmasters remained the main recourse to traditional education in Germany.<sup>34</sup> Many of these Eastern-European migrants played a role in the development of the German Haskalah thanks to their thorough knowledge of religious Hebrew texts. They distinguished themselves by their activity as authors, publishers and translators who popularised works on philosophy, astronomy and other natural sciences. They often worked as teachers of sacred texts and Hebrew language. Upon arrival to Western Europe, they became integrated in the local Jewish communities. The salon led by Moses Mendelssohn in Berlin was a place of gathering for the local Jewish elite, and Eastern-European intellectuals such as Dubno as well as Barukh Schick of Shklov (1744-1808), Isaac Satanov (1732-

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<sup>30</sup> Werner Weinberg, "Language Questions Relating to Moses Mendelssohn's Pentateuch Translation (In Commemoration of the 200th Anniversary of the Bi'ur)", *Hebrew Union College Annual* 55 (1984), 228.

<sup>31</sup> Mordechai Zalkin, "Kavim li-demut ha-moreh ba-haskalah ha-yehudit be-mizrah eropa be-reshit ha-me'ah ha-tesha esreh" in: Avner Ben-Amos; Yael Tamir (eds), *Ha-moreh bein shelihut le-miktso'a* (Tel Aviv: Ramot, 1995), 29-30.

<sup>32</sup> Shmuel Feiner, "The Modern Jewish Woman. A Test-Case in the Relationship between Haskalah and Modernity", *Zion* 58 (1993), 455.

<sup>33</sup> Weinberg, "Language Questions", 227.

<sup>34</sup> Berkovitz, "Jewish Law and Ritual in Early Modern Germany", 485-486.

1804) and Solomon Maimon (1753-1800) were frequent guests there.<sup>35</sup> The patronage of the financial elite enabled these scholars to engage in their intellectual pursuits through covering the cost of their publications and employing them as private tutors, as happened in the case of Dubno and Satanow who taught the children of Daniel Itzig-Jaffe. Most of these migrants had a thorough religious education, and shared the ambition to publish their own books and to study subjects that did not belong in the traditional Jewish curriculum. A few of them gained recognition in non-Jewish circles as well, such as Solomon Maimon, who became renowned in Prussia for his interpretation of Kant's philosophy, or Hyman Hurwitz (1770–1844), a Polish Jew who became the first professor of Hebrew at University College London.<sup>36</sup> Another prominent self-educated Eastern-European Jew, Zalkind Hourwitz (1751–1812), won the literary competition of the Royal Society of Arts and Sciences in Metz in 1788 with his essay *Vindication of the Jews (Apologie des Juifs)*. Furthermore, he obtained a post at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris but lost it due to his support of the French revolution.<sup>37</sup>

However, the vast majority of Polish scholars directed their work exclusively at the Jewish public and had little, if any, interaction with Gentiles. Their knowledge of biblical Hebrew and religious writings enabled them to take part in the development of the intellectual achievements of the Jewish Enlightenment. Many of these scholars had a vivid interest in medieval Jewish

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<sup>35</sup> Shmuel Feiner, *The Jewish Enlightenment* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 205-206.

<sup>36</sup> David B. Ruderman, *Jewish Enlightenment in an English Key* (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000), 261-268.

<sup>37</sup> Francis Malino, *A Jew in the French Revolution: The Life of Zalkind Hourwitz* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1996).

philosophy. Isaac Satanow published works popularising medieval philosophy (*Sefer ha-midot*, 1784). Menahem Mendel Lefin (1749-1826) translated *the Guide of the Perplexed* into Mishnaic Hebrew (1829). Solomon Maimon, being critical of the traditional Jewish curriculum, devoted himself to the study of philosophy and rose to prominence in 1790 thanks to his *Versuch über die Transscendentalphilosophie*, a commentary on Kant's *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*.<sup>38</sup>

Many of them attempted to introduce Jewish readers to non-religious studies. Menashe of Ilya (1767-1831) became known for his criticism of *pilpul* (casuistic analysis of the Talmudic text) and a predilection for secular sciences, as well as for his desire to reform the Jewish population in terms of its customs and education. He caused a major outrage among the rabbinic elite when he denounced some interpretations of authoritative texts such as Rashi's commentary or the Tosafot.<sup>39</sup> Israel Zamosc (about 1700-1772), who taught mathematics and philosophy to Moses Mendelssohn, authored several rabbinic works, a commentary on *Ruah ḥen* (a medieval introduction to *the Guide of the Perplexed*), as well as books dealing with astronomy: *Netsaḥ Yisra'el*, *Arubot ha-shamayim* and commentaries on Isaac Israeli's *Yesod olam* and Delmedigo's *Sefer elim*.<sup>40</sup> Also Barukh Schick authored several scientific publications, including a book on astronomy *Amude shamayim* and a medical work based on

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<sup>38</sup> Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn*, 360-62.

<sup>39</sup> Isaac Barzilay, "The Life of Menashe of Ilya (1767-1831)", *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 50 (1983), 1-35; Immanuel Etkes, "Le-she'elat mevasre ha-haskalah bi-mizraḥ eropah," *Tarbits* 57.1 (1987), 107-109.

<sup>40</sup> Gad Freudenthal, "Jewish Traditionalism and Early Modern Science: Rabbi Israel Zamosc's Dialectic of Enlightenment" (Berlin: 1744) in: David Biale, Robert S. Westman (eds), *Thinking Impossible: The Intellectual Legacy of Amos Funkenstein* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 66-67.



Gallen's theory of humours, *Tiferet Adam* (1777), and *Keneh ha-midah* (1783), a volume on mathematics. He also translated Euclid's *Elements* into Hebrew. Schick aimed at the popularisation of science and the uprooting of ignorance among the Jewish population, while still remaining faithful to his traditional lifestyle.<sup>41</sup>

Satanow experimented with genres which were no longer popular or completely new to Hebrew literature. In composing his *Mishle Asaf* (1789-1802) in biblical Hebrew, he drew his inspiration from Wisdom literature, while his *Divre rivot* (1800) was a modern rendition of Yehuda Halevi's *Kuzari*, which he transformed into a drama-of ideas.<sup>42</sup> By contrast, Lefin turned from biblical Hebrew to Yiddish, a language that could be easily understood by the Jewish masses. He translated the Book of Proverbs into Judeo-German (1814) and published several works in Yiddish, rendering them more accessible to the Eastern-European public than other maskilic writings composed in German or Hebrew. Just like Satanow, Dubno composed his works in biblical Hebrew, and, similarly to Lefin, he strove to make the Pentateuch understandable to the Jewish population through his work with Mendelssohn on *Sefer netivot ha-shalom*.

While the above-mentioned Eastern-European Jews differ in their intellectual interests and level of assimilation into the Gentile society, they all shared a desire for expanding their knowledge beyond the traditional curriculum. They approached this task in many ways, from the study of (outdated) Jewish scientific treatises to the transforming of the textual tradition by re-writing existing

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<sup>41</sup> David E. Fishman, *Russia's First Modern Jews. The Jews of Shklov* (New York; London: New York University Press, 1994), 22-45.

<sup>42</sup> Moshe Pelli, "Literature of Haskalah in the late 18th Century", *Zeitschrift für Religions-und Geistesgeschichte* 52.4 (2000), 336-339.

texts in a novel form or even translating them into Yiddish, to translating Gentile books into Hebrew or even abandoning Jewish textual tradition in favour of writing for the Gentile public. Their disparate stances towards the study of secular sciences, modern languages and Hebrew texts are representative of the intellectual climate of the Jewish Enlightenment, whose followers, coming from a variety of academic backgrounds and espousing different worldviews, often adopted contradictory opinions.<sup>43</sup>

Like all of the above-mentioned Polish Jews, Dubno took part in the formation of the Haskalah through his scholarly and literary activity. Taking into account Dubno's literary output, he seems to be similar in his outlook to other early maskilim such as Isaac Satanow or Isaac Zamosc. While he did not have a clear agenda as some Prussian maskilim, such as Isaac Euchel and David Friedländer, he seems to have been an inspiration for some followers of the Jewish Enlightenment, such as Wolf Heidenheim, who corresponded with Dubno and whose *Maḥzor* edition is reminiscent of the Biur, as it includes a revised Hebrew text with a German translation, for which Dubno wrote his *haskamah*. Also, Dubno's booklet of approbations for his Pentateuch edition, obituary and epitaph suggest that he was admired by his contemporaries for his expertise in grammar and biblical exegesis.

In comparison to other Eastern-European Jews who moved to Western Europe and participated in the maskilic activity, Dubno's case deserves special attention because of the insight his life and work can give into the differing nuances between diverse trends within the Jewish Enlightenment. The multitude of maskilic attitudes, at times being at odds with each other, is particularly visible

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<sup>43</sup> Schatz, "Peoples Pure of Speech", 169-187.

through his collaboration with Moses Mendelssohn on *Sefer netivot ha-shalom*. Even though Mendelssohn and Dubno had very different backgrounds, interests and education, they shared similar goals, which evolved around the wish to popularise the study of Hebrew and the Hebrew Bible. However, their attempt at carrying out jointly a publication of the German Pentateuch translation revealed that they espoused two different maskilic visions which turned out to be irreconcilable.

Throughout most of his life Dubno was engaged in “the holy handicraft” of book production.<sup>44</sup> He published several writings, copied volumes by hand and worked as a bookseller in Amsterdam, where he settled in 1767.<sup>45</sup> Dubno’s letter, sent from Sudylkiv in 1770, suggests that his work might have involved regular business travel between Eastern and Western Europe.<sup>46</sup> One explanation for his decision to move to the Dutch Republic and not to another location in the West might have been his acquaintance with Saul Lowenstam (1717 – 1790), the rabbi of Amsterdam, who was earlier a rabbi of Dubno, where they first met. Since Dubno’s profession as a bookseller and a teacher from Eastern Europe put him in a financially unstable position, the potential support of a local rabbi might have encouraged him to travel to Amsterdam. Furthermore, Amsterdam was the most important publishing centre of Hebrew literature at that time and could, therefore, offer Dubno more opportunities as a scholar, publisher and bookseller than any other European city.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Lajb Fuks; Renate G. Fuks-Mansfeld, *Hebrew Typography in the Northern Netherlands 1585–1815* (Leiden: Brill, 1987), vol. 1, 6.

<sup>45</sup> Bartal, *The Jews of Eastern Europe*, 94; Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn*, 354.

<sup>46</sup> Samuel b. Azriel Mulder, *Reshit meḥkar plying ve-tuhah*, c. 1820, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana in Amsterdam, HS. ROS. 337, 21b - 23a.

<sup>47</sup> Leib Fuks, “Amsterdam: Hebrew Printing”, *European Judaism: A Journal for the New Europe* 5.2 (Summer 1971), 17.

The intellectual climate of Jewish Amsterdam was shaped by both local Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jewry. Sephardim began to immigrate to the Low Countries at the end of the sixteenth century. The community quickly rose to prominence thanks to its connections with their co-religionists who had settled in the New World, as well as with the Jews who had been forcibly converted to Catholicism and remained in the Iberian Peninsula. These international links enabled them to play a prominent part in the Dutch Republic's profitable trade in colonial goods.<sup>48</sup> The community experienced significant growth in the course of the seventeenth century due to the economic crisis in Venice during its war with the Ottoman Empire (1645-1669), the loss of Dutch Brazil to Portugal in 1654, and the bankruptcy of Spain in 1647.<sup>49</sup> The number of Ashkenazi immigrants to Amsterdam rose significantly after the Thirty Years' War and the Chmielnicki Uprising.<sup>50</sup> This increase in immigration created a growing need for Jewish books, and resulted in the establishment of Amsterdam as the main publishing centre of Hebrew literature.<sup>51</sup>

The Sephardic Diaspora in Amsterdam was more diverse than the Ashkenazic community, comprising such groups as *marranos* and former *marranos* who, upon leaving Spain or Portugal for Amsterdam, were able to resume the open practice of Judaism with varying degrees of orthodoxy.<sup>52</sup> By returning to Judaism without rejecting their Iberian heritage, the Dutch Sephardim

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<sup>48</sup> Jonathan Israel, "Sephardic Immigration into the Dutch Republic, 1595-1672", *Studia Rosenthaliana* 23 (Fall 1989), 45.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.* 52.

<sup>50</sup> Yosef Kaplan, "Amsterdam and Ashkenazi Migration in the Seventeenth Century," *Studia Rosenthaliana* 23.2 (Fall 1989).

<sup>51</sup> Fuks, "Amsterdam: Hebrew Printing", 17.

<sup>52</sup> Yosef Kaplan, "Wayward New Christians and Stubborn New Jews: The Shaping of a Jewish Identity," *Jewish History* 8.1-2 (1994), 27-41.

incorporated differing elements of both Jewish and Christian cultures, thus creating a unique, hybrid identity.<sup>53</sup> The Portuguese Jews were often better integrated into Dutch society, while their German and Polish coreligionists retained more of the traditional, religious lifestyle.<sup>54</sup> According to Melkman, thanks to the influence of Spanish and Portuguese cultures, Amsterdam Jews valued Hebrew not least as a literary language. They took pride in the poetic legacy of Yehuda Halevi and Solomon ibn Gabirol and wanted to cultivate the Hebrew literary tradition.<sup>55</sup> In the 'Hebra Kedusa de Talmud Tora' of Amsterdam, already in the seventeenth century children were taught grammar and encouraged to speak Hebrew and compose poems in that language.<sup>56</sup>

David Sorkin described the Amsterdam community as a type of 'port Jews', that is, Sephardi and Italian Jews of the early modern period who resided in some of the major port cities of Europe and the New World, such as Venice, London and others.<sup>57</sup> Just as other 'port Jews', the Amsterdam Jewry would not have the same right as the Gentile population when it comes to participation in political life or administration (until its emancipation in 1796). At the same time, they were not subject to laws that would single them out as Jews, as for example additional taxation, and did not live in legally autonomous communities.<sup>58</sup> For that reason, the extent of the emancipation of Dutch Jews was much larger than in

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<sup>53</sup> Daniel M. Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans: the Portuguese Jews of Seventeenth-century Amsterdam* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2000), 315-323.

<sup>54</sup> Samantha Baskind, "Distinguishing the Distinction: Picturing Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth- Century Amsterdam", *Journal for the Study of Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewry* 1.1 (February 2007), 1-2.

<sup>55</sup> Jozeph Melkman, "David Franco Mendes: a Hebrew poet" (PhD dissertation, University of Amsterdam, 1951), 24-25, 27.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.* 22-24.

<sup>57</sup> David Sorkin, "Port Jews and the Three Regions of Emancipation", *Jewish Culture and History* 4.2 (2001), 31.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.* 37-38, Lois C. Dubin, *The Port Jews of Habsburg Trieste: Absolutist Politics and Enlightenment Culture* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 198-225.

other communities. In the eighteenth century, Amsterdam Sephardim would conduct their literary activity mainly in Portuguese and, to a smaller extent, in Hebrew, while Spanish lost its former importance as a literary language. Local Jews engaged in composing occasional poetry in Hebrew, such as riddles and song lyrics that were meant for community-related celebrations. These poets often imitated and translated European works of the time, thus including Jewish literature into the broader European literature. However, while they pursued secular studies, they did so without rejecting the traditional religious canon.<sup>59</sup>

From the end of the seventeenth century, Ashkenazi Jews admired the contemporary Sephardic Jewry of Amsterdam for their Hebrew scholarship. While they did not show a great interest in the medieval Sephardic Jewish community, their successors, the eighteenth-century maskilim, read works by Andalusian authors such as Yehudah Halevi, Moses Maimonides and Abraham ibn Ezra and studied them in a critical way. Maskilic Ashkenazi grammarians read grammar treatises by their Sephardi counterparts, but they did not hesitate to point out their imperfections in style and arrangement, as happened in the case of Judah Neumark's *Shoresh Yehudah*, in which he criticised Moses and David Kimhi.<sup>60</sup> In his *Divre shalom ve-emet*, Wessely evoked Andalusia as an example of a thriving Jewish community in a diaspora, but at the same time he paid more attention to contemporary Sephardim in the Ottoman Empire, who were living proof that Jews could live in peace and prosperity also in the eighteenth century.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Irene Zwiép, "Jewish Enlightenment Reconsidered: the Dutch Eighteenth Century" in: Resianne Fontaine, Andrea Schatz, and Irene Zwiép (eds), *Sepharad in Ashkenaz: Medieval Knowledge and Eighteenth-century Enlightened Jewish Discourse* (Amsterdam: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, 2007), 283-286

<sup>60</sup> Andrea Schatz, "Returning to Sepharad. Maskilic Reflections on Hebrew in the Diaspora" in: Fontaine, *Sepharad in Ashkenaz*, 270-272.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.* 274-275.

According to Andrea Schatz, the eighteenth-century maskilim did not advocate the overly secular vision of Andalusian Jews that scholars of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* ascribed to the medieval Sephardic community, and they did not wish to imitate them.<sup>62</sup> Still, maskilic rabbis idealised the Sephardic educational system, which they compared favourably with the traditional, Ashkenazi curriculum.<sup>63</sup> Wessely, for example, described the Sephardim of Amsterdam as great Torah scholars, whose pronunciation of Hebrew was grammatically more correct than the Ashkenazi one.<sup>64</sup>

The Sephardic and Ashkenazic communities of Amsterdam lived separately with relatively little interaction.<sup>65</sup> Ashkenazic Jews had much admiration for the Sephardic culture and education, which they perceived as a model to follow, and whose literature was available to the masses through Yiddish translation.<sup>66</sup> Nevertheless, there were cases of social intermingling and intellectual exchange between the two communities. During his stay in Amsterdam, Naphtali Herz Wessely became acquainted with the literary circles of the local Sephardim. Franco Mendes, a Dutch Sephardi Jew, published some of his works in *Ha-Me'asef* and was a member of *Hevrat dorshe ever*.<sup>67</sup> Books such as *Sefer ha-mevakesh* by Shem Tov ibn Falaquera and Euclid's *Elements*, translated by Barukh Schick, received approbations by both Sephardic and

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid. 263-277. By contrast, German Jews of the nineteenth century sought to link themselves to both contemporary and medieval Sephardic cultural heritage. See: Ismar Schorsch, "The Myth of Sephardic Supremacy", *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 34.1 (1989), 47-66.

<sup>63</sup> Sorkin, *The Berlin Haskalah*, 40-41.

<sup>64</sup> Naphtali Herz Wessely, *Divrei shalom ve-emet* (Vienna: 1826), 164-165.

<sup>65</sup> Baskind, "Distinguishing the Distinction", 2.

<sup>66</sup> Renata Fuks-Mansfeld, "The Role of Yiddish in Early Dutch-Jewish Haskalah", *Studia Rosenthaliana* 36 (2002-2003), 149.

<sup>67</sup> See page 264. Zwiep, "Jewish Enlightenment Reconsidered", 289.

Ashkenazic rabbis: Saul ha-Levi of The Hague, Ashkenazic rabbi of Amsterdam, Saul Lowenstamm, and Sephardic rabbi of Amsterdam, Solomon Shalem.<sup>68</sup> Being a Polish Jew, Dubno spent most of his time in Ashkenazic social circles. However, he must have attended the Sephardic Library of Ets Hayim, where he discovered a manuscript of Luzzatto's *La-yesharim tehilah*, which he republished.<sup>69</sup> He also copied David Franco-Mendes' *Masekhet Purim yerushalmi* and added to it a Purim riddle of his authorship.<sup>70</sup> The auction catalogue, which was composed after his death, contains several items composed by Sephardic authors, some of them of contemporary Amsterdam, which suggests that Dubno must have been familiar with the Hebrew literature of local Sephardim,<sup>71</sup> either out of personal interest or in connection with his profession as a bookseller.

Having spent five years in Amsterdam, in 1772 Dubno moved to Berlin, where he was an active scholar and publisher for ten years.<sup>72</sup> While the reason for his decision to move to the Prussian capital is unknown, one might suspect that Dubno was attracted by the city's reputation as the centre of Enlightenment scholars and proponents of rationalism. In fact, a significant proportion of the Berlin maskilim were of Eastern-European origins.<sup>73</sup> A record of Dubno's sources

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid. 293, 300.

<sup>69</sup> See page 267.

<sup>70</sup> The manuscript is stored at the National Library of Israel, microfilm no. F 39482. See n. 574 and page 281.

<sup>71</sup> See the chapter "Solomon Dubno's booklists."

<sup>72</sup> On the first page of his booklist of 1771, three years after he had settled in the Dutch Republic Dubno expresses his wish to stay in Amsterdam. Solomon Dubno, *Reshimah mi-sefarim sheli* (Amsterdam: 1771), Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana in Amsterdam, HS. ROS. 469.

<sup>73</sup> Steven M. Lowenstein, *The Berlin Jewish Community. Enlightenment, Family, and Crisis, 1770-1830* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 34; Olga Litvak, *Haskalah: the Romantic Movement in Judaism* (New Brunswick, N.J.; London: Rutgers University Press, 2012), 24-46.



of income between 1774 and 1778 shows that he supported himself by teaching, reading the Torah in synagogue on Sabbath, selling books and lottery tickets, as well as by taking on occasional jobs such as writing custom-made poems.<sup>74</sup> Among his pupils were Josef and Mendel, sons of Moses Mendelssohn, the sons of Tzvi Hirsch Levin, the rabbi of Berlin, and the son of one of the wealthiest Jews of Berlin, Daniel Itzig-Jaffe. He became engaged to work on Mendelssohn's German Pentateuch translation project, *Sefer netivot ha-shalom* (*Paths of Peace*), for which he wrote a Hebrew prospectus, *Alim li-terufah* (*Leaves for Healing*) and a commentary on the Book of Genesis. Since Dubno's commentary was meant to elucidate Mendelssohn's German translation, he had to have a sufficient level of understanding of written German. However, it needs to be stressed that Dubno never composed anything in any language other than Hebrew, and that *Sefer netivot ha-shalom* was written in Hebrew, not Latin characters. It is also possible that Dubno was able to comprehend Mendelssohn's German translation mainly because it was juxtaposed with the Hebrew text, which he read fluently. His understanding of written German was probably aided by his knowledge of Yiddish. While Yiddish spoken by Polish Jews considerably differed from the one spoken by German Jewry,<sup>75</sup> after having spent several years in Berlin Dubno might have gained the ability to speak a local dialect of Yiddish, which was much closer to the German language than its Polish counterpart. It is highly unlikely that he was proficient in speaking German, as his contacts with non-Jews were probably very limited.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> A register of Dubno's revenue was sold at auction in 1990. Kamenetsky gives a summary of its content in "Haskamot gedole ha-rabanim le-ḥumashim shel rabi Shlomo Dubno", *Yeshurun* 8 (2001), 724, n. 17.

<sup>75</sup> Weinberg, "Language Questions", 227.

<sup>76</sup> See pages 91-93.

As Mendelssohn acknowledged, Dubno was the initiator and the driving force behind this publication: "God sent me the learned grammarian, our teacher and master, Rabbi Solomon Dubno [...] When the above-mentioned rabbi saw my translation of the Torah, he liked it and found it fit for use, and he asked me to give him permission to publish it for the sake of Jewish children."<sup>77</sup> In a letter to Moses Fischer (dated March 6, 1784), Mendelssohn admitted that he felt incompetent in the field of Hebrew grammar and had to ask Dubno and other scholars to pen a grammatical explanation of the Hebrew Scriptures: "And regarding grammar [...], to be honest, I am not an expert in this kind of work, which I have not studied sufficiently, and all the grammatical points in the commentary on the Torah were written either by Rabbi Solomon Dubno, or by other people renowned for this work."<sup>78</sup>

There is no doubt that Mendelssohn and Dubno were linked by close and friendly relations prior to the publication of *Sefer netivot ha-shalom*. In a correspondence with his wife, Fromet, Mendelssohn regularly sent his regards to Dubno.<sup>79</sup> In one of his letters to Dubno, he copied a riddle, which testifies to, at least sometimes, a more playful disposition of Mendelssohn in his contact with Dubno,<sup>80</sup> while the latter always addressed the former with reverence, often as

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid. 243; letter to Avigdor Levi, dated May 25, 1779 in: GSJ vol. 19, no. 227, 251-252. "והנה הקרה ה' לפני את החכם המדקדק מהו' שלמה [...] וכאשר ראה הרב הנ"ל את תרגום התורה שבידי, מצא חן בעיניו, ויבקש מאתי לתת לו רשות להדפיסו לתועלת ילדי בני ישראל."

<sup>78</sup> GSJ, vol. 19, letter no. 272, 291.

"ועל דבר הדקדוק [...], האמת אגיד שאין אני בקי בדרכי המלאכה הזאת, ולא שקדתי עליו ככל הצורך, וכל מקומות הדקדוק שבבאור התורה, הם או מר"ש דובני, או מאנשים אחרים ידועים ומפורסמים בדקדוקי המלאכה ההיא [...]."

<sup>79</sup> GSJ, vol. 20.2, letter no. 196 (Koenigsberg, 27-29.07.1777), 329; letter no. 193 (Koenigsberg, 18.07.1777), 322, letter no. 230 (Strelitz, June 1779), 375.

<sup>80</sup> GSJ, vol. 19, letter no. 202 (Koenigsberg, August 1777). Dubno offers a solution to the riddle in his letter of 23.09.1777, Berlin - see: *ibid.* letter no. 204.

“Your Highness.”<sup>81</sup> However, following a dispute with Mendelssohn, Dubno abandoned the project and left Berlin for Vilna, where he conceived of publishing his own Pentateuch edition. Although he managed to collect several approbations for this project, he never gained the necessary means to bring it to fruition. In 1783, following a year long sojourn in Eastern Europe, Dubno returned to Amsterdam, where he remained until his death in 1813.<sup>82</sup>

In this study, Dutch maskilim are defined as Jews who devoted themselves to the cultivation of poetry, belles-lettres and secular knowledge, that is, to creation of new literary canon.<sup>83</sup> This did not necessarily imply the rejection of the religious heritage, but rather it was seen to complement it. In this way, the definition encompasses both tradition-oriented Jews who were active in the eighteenth century, as well as their more ecumenical, nineteenth-century successors. The most prominent Dutch maskilim included Hirsh Somerhausen (1781-1853), the founder of the Tot Nun society focused on the arts and sciences, Samuel Mulder (1792-1860), who established Tongeleth, a confraternity dedicated to Hebrew grammar and ethics, and David Franco Mendes and Isaac Cohen Belinfante, Hebrew poets.

The epitaph on Dubno’s tombstone at the Muiderberg cemetery, which was transcribed by Samuel Israel Mulder, acknowledges Dubno’s achievements as a scholar and poet:

“Here is the bed of Solomon. Here rests a righteous and God-fearing man.  
He is well known as one of the heroes whose wisdom will be sung about.  
Out of the storehouse of his books his springs will spread to every corner.

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<sup>81</sup> “*ma’alatekhah*”, GSJ, vol. 19, letter no. 237.

<sup>82</sup> Eliakim Carmoly, “Solomon Dubno”, *Revue Orientale* (Brussels: 1844), vol. 3, 312.

<sup>83</sup> Zwiep, “Jewish Enlightenment Reconsidered”, 279-309.

He, by means of his excellent commentary, restored the crown [of the Pentateuch] to its past glory. He surely was the great grammarian, leading master of the art of poetic meter, our teacher and Rabbi Solomon, son of our teacher, Rabbi Yoel of Dubno, the righteous man of blessed memory. He was summoned to the heavenly *yeshivah* on Wednesday at dawn, on the 25th of Sivan, at an advanced age, being seventy-four years old at the moment of his death, in the year (Psalm 119:136) "My eyes shed streams of tears" without counting the thousands.<sup>84</sup> May his soul be bound up in the bond of everlasting life."<sup>85</sup>

Despite his poverty, Solomon Dubno, or perhaps his son, must have paid the *kehilah* a membership fee of 100 rijksdaalders (250 guilders), as only this payment would have given him the right to be buried at the Muiderberg cemetery.<sup>86</sup> Only the Dutch community members of the highest rank, the *yehidim*, or some well-off *orehim* (migrants), could afford to bear this cost.<sup>87</sup> Dubno participated in the literary and scholarly activity in Amsterdam through his

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<sup>84</sup> The numerological value of the verse is 573, which represents the Jewish calendar year equivalent to 1813.

<sup>85</sup> Samuel Israel Mulder, *Iets over de Begraafplaatsen der Nederlandsch-Israëlitische Gemeente te Amsterdam, en bijzonder over die te Muiderberg, met eene opgave van twintig grafschriften* (Amsterdam: Van Embden & C, 1851), 15.

"הנה מטתו של שלמה. פה שוכן למנוחה איש צדיק תמים באמונה לו שם בגבורים וחכמתו בחוץ תרונה, מבית גנזי ספריו יפיצו מעינותיו לכל פנה הוא ע"י ביאורו הטוב החזיר עטרה ליושנה. ה"ה המדקדק הגדול ראש למלאכת משקל השירים כמוהר"ר שלמה במו"ה יואל מדובנא זצ"ל. נתבקש בישיבה של מעלה ביום ד' בעלו ת השחר כ"ה לחודש סיון זקן ושבע ימים בן ארבעה ושבעים שנה היה במותו שנת פלגי מים ירדו עיני לפ"ק. תנצב"ה."

<sup>86</sup> Compare with 300 guilders, the average yearly wages of a non-Jewish guild member. Since Jews could not become guild members, an average Jewish craftsman must have had a low income. Judith Belinfante, "The Ideal of Jewish Tradition versus the Reality of the Jewish Poor: The Dilemma of the Ashkenazi Jewish Nation", *Studia Rosenthaliana* 30.1 (1996), 216.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.* 214-215, 218.

teaching and popularisation of the Hebrew language, which already had a very strong position in the Sephardic school curriculum. While he did not transform the Dutch Jewish intellectual climate in any way, his scholarship fit in well with the intellectual climate of Jewish Amsterdam, which was rather conservative,<sup>88</sup> and, probably for that reason, Dubno, a religious Polish Jew, was able to find common grounds with the Amsterdam Jewry. His obituary suggests that he was highly respected in the Dutch community:

“Today passed away, at the age of 74, the venerable and knowledgeable Rabbi, Solomon Yoel Dubno, author of the famous commentary on the Bible translated by the philosopher Mendelssohn, and of many other theological works. All those who knew the deceased and who appreciated his profound erudition, his broad command of the holy language, as well as his virtuous, mild and loyal personality, lament the loss that both literature and society have suffered, and they find their consolation only in the sublime thoughts he has left us, and in the notion that his noble soul, by leaving this frivolous life, has been elevated to the heights of beatitude and true glory.”<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Zwiép, “Jewish Enlightenment Reconsidered”, 296.

<sup>89</sup> The text of Dubno’s obituary was published in French and Dutch by the executors of his last will, Abraham Israel Snisler-Levy, H. Binger, and S. M. de Boer:

“Aujourd’hui est décédé à l’âge de 74 ans, le vénérable et très savant rabbin, Salomon Joel Dubno, auteur du célèbre commentaire de la bible, traduite par le philosophe Mendelssohn, et de plusieurs autres ouvrages de théologie. Tous ceux qui ont connu le défunt et qui ont su apprécier sa profonde érudition, sa connaissance étendue de la langue sacrée, ainsi que son caractère vertueux, doux et loyal, pleurent la perte que la littérature et la société [ont?] en essuyé, et ne trouvent leur consolation que dans les pensées sublimes qui nous restent de lui et dans l’idée que son âme noble, en quittant cette vie frivole, s’est élevée dans les hautes régions de béatitude et de vraie gloire.”

Both the obituary and tombstone epitaph mention with respect Dubno's commentary to *Sefer netivot ha-shalom* and his pious character. The epitaph describes him as a poet and grammarian, an expression Dubno used to describe himself in his *haskamah* to Heidenheim's *Maḥzor*.<sup>90</sup> The obituary also mentions his knowledge of Hebrew and his "theological works" besides the *Biur*. It is unclear to which books exactly the authors of the obituary refer to, but they might mean his *Birat Yosef* on the Writing and Prophets sections of the Bible. However, the obituary claims that there were many of them, which might reveal the authors' lack of familiarity with Dubno's oeuvre, as his literary activity focused mainly on poetry and grammar. Both epitaph and obituary might be interpreted as reflecting the interests of some of the Dutch Jews in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, who, driven by the desire to assert their Jewish heritage, became involved in attempts at integration of the Hebrew grammar and religious literature into modern Jewish life in Amsterdam.<sup>91</sup> Dubno's work fit in well within the activities of these intellectuals, and that might be the reason why it was evaluated in such a positive light.

While the Dutch Jews practiced their literary activity and study of the Hebrew language out of their own need to preserve their Jewish heritage, there has been a prevalent opinion that their interests have been influenced by the Berlin Haskalah. For example, in the early twentieth century, Dubno was believed to have had an influence on the establishment of such organisations as Reshit

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Centraal Bureau voor Genealogie, Den Haag, no. VFADNL027170-1, record date: 23.06.1813.

<sup>90</sup> See pages 289-290.

<sup>91</sup> Irene Zwiep, idem, "Jewish Enlightenment (almost) without Haskalah: the Dutch Example", *Jewish Culture and History* 13.2-3 (2012), 224, 229.

Hokhmah,<sup>92</sup> a pietist society, and Samuel Israel Mulder's To'elet (Tongeleth), a literary and scientific association.<sup>93</sup> The former was established in 1813, just before Dubno's death, and devoted its study meetings to Dubno's biblical commentary. Mulder calls Dubno a learned scholar, whose name is known among Jewish scholars,<sup>94</sup> but he does not seem to be significantly affected by his works. Similarly, according to Paula Tuinhout-Keuning, the engagement of To'elet in the study of Hebrew can be seen as the direct influence of Dubno, who popularised the ideas of the German Haskalah in Amsterdam. In her opinion, until the society was established in 1815, the Hebrew language was of marginal importance to Dutch Jewry.<sup>95</sup> This view is disputed by Irene Zwiep, who emphasises the independent development of the Dutch Jewish intellectual climate from the Berlin Haskalah and who sees To'elet as an expression of nationalism of the Dutch Jews after the end of Napoleonic Wars and the creation of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands in 1815.<sup>96</sup> In her assessment of the Dutch Jewish intellectual climate, Zwiep refutes the assumption that it was an offshoot of the Berlin Haskalah, pointing instead to the influence of the Dutch

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<sup>92</sup> Benzion J. Hirsch, "De heer Seeligmann weet, dat wijlen Friedirichsfeld", *Nieuw Israelietisch weekblad* 39 (16.02.1923), 10; idem, "Bijdrage tot de geschiedenis der 'Bioer'", *De vrijdagavond: joodsch weekblad* 47 (19.02.1926), 324.

<sup>93</sup> I. Maarsen, "'Tongeleth,' Een Joodsch letterkundige kring in de XIXde eeuw", *De vrijdagavond: joodsch weekblad* 35 (12.11.1924), 135. To'elet published two of Dubno's poems, "Shir al ro'a midat ha-ge'evah, ve-tovat midat ha-anvah" and "Shir na'eh al midat ha-ḥanupah." See: Samuel Israel Mulder (ed.), *Bikure to'elet* (Amsterdam: J. van Embden, 1820), vol. 1, 4-10; 115.

<sup>94</sup> Mulder, *Iets over de begraafplaatsen der Nederlandsch-Israëlitische gemeente*, 8.

<sup>95</sup> Paula Tuinhout-Keuning, "Kitve ha-ḥevrah ha-amsterdamit to'elet ve-ha-haskalah be-germaniah", Yosef Michmann (ed.), *Mehkarim al toldot yahadut holand* (Jerusalem:1988), vol. 5, 217-271.

<sup>96</sup> Irene Zwiep, "Religion, Culture (and Nation) in Nineteenth-century Dutch Jewish Thought" in Yosef Kaplan, Dan Mikhman (eds), *The Religious Cultures of Dutch Jewry* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2017), 249-269; idem, "Jewish Enlightenment (almost) without Haskalah", 220-234.

Christian Enlightenment. In fact, only one Dutch Jew, David Franco Mendes, ever contributed to *Ha-Me'asef*, while David Wagenaar, a Dutch maskil who translated Mendelssohn's *Phädon*,<sup>97</sup> did not even manage to publish it.<sup>98</sup> The presence in Amsterdam of Naphtali Herz Wessely or Solomon Dubno, both of them involved in the Berlin Haskalah, was of marginal importance in the development of the Dutch Jewish intellectual life. The literary activity of the Dutch maskilim reached its height at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when the Haskalah in Prussia no longer dictated the intellectual agenda of the local Jewish elite. The Dutch Jewish intellectuals occupied themselves with different themes than the Berlin Haskalah and they expressed a continuum of different approaches to Judaism and its historical significance. While at the end of the eighteenth century their stance remained closer to the early Jewish Enlightenment, at the beginning of the nineteenth century it tended to be more non-denominational. It was linguistically distinctive from the Berlin Haskalah, and most of its literary works were composed in Dutch and Hebrew. Therefore, due to the lack of connection between the Dutch intellectual climate and the Berlin Haskalah, the term 'Haskalah' is not appropriate in the context of the Dutch Jewry.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana, HS. ROS. 263.

<sup>98</sup> Zwiep, "Jewish Enlightenment (almost) without Haskalah", 220-234; idem, "Jewish Enlightenment Reconsidered", 301-302. Altmann suggests that the reason for not publishing the translation was Wagenaar's insufficient command of German and Mendelssohn's unwillingness to proofread his manuscript. Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn*, 192-193.

<sup>99</sup> Zwiep, "Jewish Enlightenment (almost) without Haskalah", 220-234.



## Re-orientations: the scope and limits of Jewish intellectual transformation in the Age of Enlightenment

Immanuel Kant described the Enlightenment as the transition from ignorance to the emergence of human consciousness. The proliferation of knowledge would prompt the process of intellectual liberation and, as he believed, it was already in the making in early modern Europe. Kant did not limit the movement to any particular doctrine, but instead, summarised it in a quote borrowed from Horace - *Sapere aude*, "Dare to know."<sup>100</sup> The followers of the Enlightenment called themselves "philosophers", defined by César du Marsais in the *Encyclopédie* as opponents to prejudice and tradition, those, who dare to think.<sup>101</sup>

The origin of the Enlightenment in general, and of the Haskalah in particular, has become a source of major scholarly debate. Some scholars, such as Ernst Cassirer, Peter Gay, Robert Darnton and John Robertson have argued for the uniform nature of Enlightenment thought. They proposed to understand the Enlightenment as constituting one transnational movement whose greatest achievement was the emergence of a secular intelligentsia that questioned religious authority.<sup>102</sup> By contrast, other scholars stress regional differences and

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<sup>100</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?* (Berlin: Dearbooks, 2016), 7-16.

<sup>101</sup> César Chesneau du Marsais, "Philosophe" in: Denis Diderot, Jean le Rond d'Alembert (eds), *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, vol. 12 (1765), 509–511.

<sup>102</sup> Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: an Interpretation. The Rise of Modern Paganism* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1967), xi-xiii, 3-8; Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* (Princeton University Press, 1951); Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 191-213; John Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment: Scotland and Naples, 1680-1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

the contribution of local culture to the predominant philosophy espoused by different intellectuals. Thus, in the 1980s, the assumption that the Enlightenment constituted a single movement was challenged, for example by Roy Porter and Mikulas Teich.<sup>103</sup> In their opinion, the term encompasses several local and national enlightenments which differed to a great extent from one another. Therefore, each of them should be studied in its own political and social context. While some characteristics of the Enlightenment were true in one country, e.g. the prevalence of atheism in France, in other locations the very opposite values were espoused by advocates of rationalistic thought who sought to reform the religious system. A variety of enlightenments was also advocated by John Pocock, and in the field of research on Haskalah - by Jeremy Dauber, who insists on viewing the Jewish Enlightenment not as a monolithic movement, but as a complex phenomenon whose characteristics changed with time and location.<sup>104</sup> This approach was criticised, for example, by Jonathan Israel who believes that the Enlightenment constituted one intellectual movement, but divides it into the 'Radical Enlightenment', a period of intellectual upheaval which he locates in the years 1650-1750 and identifies to a great extent with the influence of Spinoza, and a subsequent "High Enlightenment", a moderate, mainstream movement represented for example by Isaac Newton or John Locke.<sup>105</sup> However, one can assume that this simplifying approach carries the risk of ignoring the diversity of

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<sup>103</sup> Roy Porter, Mikulas Teich (eds), *The Enlightenment in National Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

<sup>104</sup> John G. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion. The Enlightenments of Edward Gibbon, 1734-1764* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), vol. 1, 5-10, 13, 292-308; Dauber, *Antonio's Devils*, 27-29, 39-40.

<sup>105</sup> Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); idem, "Enlightenment! Which Enlightenment?", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 67.3 (Jul., 2006), 523-545.

opinions expressed by the followers of the Enlightenment and, consequently, it might result in a too schematic depiction of the phenomenon.

Similarly, in the field of Haskalah studies, there has been a trend to attribute the onset of the movement to the activity of the German maskilim, who, influenced by the Aufklärung, further inspired other Jewish communities in Europe to adopt the ideas of the Haskalah. This view has been adopted by Jacob Katz, according to whom the German Haskalah became a template for the Jewish enlightenments that took place in other European countries.<sup>106</sup> However, the Germanocentric perception of the Haskalah has been gradually abandoned by a number of scholars. An alternative understanding, emphasising the variety of Jewish pathways towards involvement with European enlightened thought has been put forward by historians such as Gershon Hundert, David Ruderman, Eliyahu Stern and David Fishman, who corroborate the view that the relationship between the followers of the Haskalah and more traditional Jewish circles was far more intricate than a simple imitation of the German Haskalah. In their opinion, several maskilim had for an aim the invigoration of Jewish religious intellectual life, and they preserved their traditional lifestyle and respect for the rabbinical elite while deepening their knowledge of secular sciences, modern languages and Hebrew grammar.<sup>107</sup> Consequently, the Enlightenment, emancipation, and modernity are no longer being inextricably linked to each other as distinct facets

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<sup>106</sup> Jacob Katz, *Out of the Ghetto: The Social Background of Jewish Emancipation, 1770-1870* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1973), 2, 36-37.

<sup>107</sup> Gershon David Hundert, "Re(de)fining Modernity in Jewish History" in: Jeremy Cohen, Moshe Rosman (eds), *Rethinking European Jewish History* (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2009), 133-148; Eliyahu Stern, *The Genius: Elijah of Vilna and the Making of Modern Judaism* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2013); Fishman, *Russia's First Modern Jews*; Ruderman, *Jewish Enlightenment in an English Key*.

of one and the same phenomenon, while current research on the Haskalah movement is increasingly being focused on local and national specificities.

An important aspect of the debate on the significance of local environments is a growing recognition of the role of Eastern-European Jews in the development of maskilic activity. Gershon Hundert has pointed to the misunderstanding of Eastern-European realities by many historians in their assessment of the intellectual life of Polish Jews. Since the Jewish population of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth constituted the vast majority of eighteenth-century Jews, it should be placed at the very heart of any study of Jewish culture during the Haskalah period. However, the intellectual and religious life of this large Jewish community has often been dismissed as of marginal importance, merely following, with some delay, the achievements of Western-European maskilim. While the German Haskalah has often featured in Jewish historiography as a model for the development of modernity, Hundert argues that modernity should not be interpreted in terms only of acculturation and assimilation, but as a highly diverse phenomenon.<sup>108</sup> Similarly, Mordechai Zalkin has criticised the perception of the Haskalah in Eastern Europe as a uniform phenomenon. He emphasised that the Jewish Enlightenment differed in its character in every location, as the maskilim were exposed to a variety of linguistic, cultural, societal and political environments. Moreover, he regards the Haskalah as a long-drawn process, marked by gradual generational change.<sup>109</sup> Israel Bartal has stated that the Haskalah movement appeared concomitantly in different

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<sup>108</sup> Hundert, "Redefining Modernity in Jewish History", 133-145.

<sup>109</sup> Mordechai Zalkin, "Meḥkar ha-Haskalah be-mizraḥ Eiropa: hasharah be-hasharah ve-dimion be-dimion?" in: Shmuel Feiner; Israel Bartal (eds), *Ha-Haskalah li-gevaneha* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2005), 165–182.

European locations, and its emergence was stimulated by the cultural exchange between the Jewish communities of Eastern and Central Europe. In his opinion, the strong German influence on the Polish Haskalah resulted from the universalistic aspirations of the German maskilim and their identification with the state rather than with the Jewish nation or ethnicity.<sup>110</sup> In fact, as Nancy Sinkoff has shown using Mendel Lefin as an example, the reception of enlightened thought by Eastern-European Jews was affected by their “Polishness”, which she defines as the combined influence of the medieval intellectual heritage of Polish Jews and the social and political reality of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth before its third and final partition in 1795.<sup>111</sup>

In this study, the Haskalah is not interpreted as a movement whose centre was the activity of German Jews, but as a dynamic and diverse diasporic phenomenon, whose characteristics differed over time and according to location.<sup>112</sup> Consequently, it assumes that the Jewish Enlightenment encompassed a continuum of different approaches towards emancipation, secularisation of Hebrew and a national Jewish identity. Even though the main activity of the Haskalah was localised in Prussia, its followers were Jews from different parts of Europe, who, just as Dubno, applied their local intellectual heritage and mentality towards shaping the movement. Furthermore, the Berlin Haskalah was only one of many faces of the Jewish Enlightenment, which

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<sup>110</sup> Bartal, *The Jews of Eastern Europe*, 91, 94-95.

<sup>111</sup> Nancy Sinkoff, *Out of the Shtetl: Making Jews Modern in the Polish Borderlands* (Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2004).

<sup>112</sup> Schatz, “Peoples Pure of Speech”, 169-187.

differed to a great extent in the Netherlands, England, Italy, and the Kingdom of Poland.<sup>113</sup>

Another scholarly debate on the nature of Jewish Enlightenment relates to its social impact and association with modernity. While Katz equated it with modernity, according to Todd Endelman, Haskalah was a marginal, elitist phenomenon, and the Jewish masses were by no means the passive objects of maskilic activity. Rather, they struggled to achieve emancipation by their own efforts and without resort to any particular intellectual framework. In fact, Jews of modest means and humble backgrounds went through the process of modernisation without being exposed to the ideas of the Enlightenment, and often their acculturation was a consequence of neglect by the elites rather than the effect of conscious action. To counter the academic focus on the intellectual elites, Endelman, who has studied the lower strata of Jewish society, rejects the notion of a separate Jewish way of becoming modern, arguing that the Jews are subject to the same historical processes as all other people, and, consequently, their culture, in each of the countries in which they live, tends to exhibit distinctive local characteristics. The processes of Jewish Enlightenment in the diverse locations in which they took place should not, therefore, be examined through the single prism of the Berlin Haskalah. Moreover, the growing secularisation of Jewish life in any one location may well be linked to a comparable trend exhibited

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<sup>113</sup> Zwiep, "Jewish Enlightenment (almost) without Haskalah"; Ruderman, *Jewish Enlightenment in an English Key*; Dubin, *The Port Jews of Habsburg Trieste*; Sinkoff, *Out of the Shtetl*.

by the local Christian population and need not necessarily be viewed as stemming from the activity of local maskilim.<sup>114</sup>

In this study, the term “modernity” is defined as a period in history characterised by the emergence of such phenomena as the public sphere and expansion of knowledge and its growing accessibility to the public.<sup>115</sup> Following Gershon Hundert, who emphasises the heterogeneity of Jewish responses to such modern occurrences as the Enlightenment and technological development, it proposes to view modernity as exclusively a period in time, with its beginning in the eighteenth century, rather than as a dichotomy of adherence to tradition and assimilation.<sup>116</sup> Among the Jewish population, the expressions of modernity evolved around the development of a secular Hebrew language, the role of Hebrew in the Jewish religious and cultural life, and emancipation.<sup>117</sup> The Jews of the early modern period, including the early maskilim, avoided taking a radical stance and, whenever a conflict occurred with the rabbinical elite, resorted to mediation. They were not interested in rebelling against the existing order in the Jewish community, and, while they tried to modify some aspects of it, they endeavoured to do so within the existing framework rather than creating a new one. By contrast, later maskilim of the 1780s and forward adopted at times a more radical, confrontational approach.<sup>118</sup> For example, while Solomon Hanau (1687-1746) believed that one could deduct the rules of Hebrew grammar by studying

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<sup>114</sup> Todd M. Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England, 1714-1830: Tradition and Change in a Liberal Society* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979).

<sup>115</sup> Schatz, “Peoples Pure of Speech”, 171-172.

<sup>116</sup> Gershon David Hundert, *Jews in Poland-Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century: A Genealogy of Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 1-3.

<sup>117</sup> Schatz, “Peoples Pure of Speech”, 187.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.; David B. Ruderman, “Introduction” in: David B. Ruderman, Giuseppe Veltri (eds), *Cultural Intermediaries: Jewish Intellectuals in Early Modern Italy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2004), 9-12.

the Hebrew Bible, Jacob Emden (1697-1776) pointed at the multiple differences in the Hebrew language between various textual sources which, in his opinion, rendered the task of standardisation of Hebrew impossible. However, both operated in the same textual tradition, regarding Hebrew as a divine language and did not seek to adopt a stance that would displease the rabbinical elite. By contrast, their successor, Judah Leib ben Ze'ev (1764-1811), presented Hebrew as a language that does not have a divine origin and advocates the use of loanwords that already appeared in the existing Jewish literature.<sup>119</sup>

In comparison to other maskilim of his time, Dubno seems to have much more in common with the early maskilim and their mediating approach rather than the Prussian maskilim such as Isaac Euchel or David Friedländer. He was open to new ideas, such as German Pentateuch translation, but he never wished to challenge the rabbinical elite. While he was committed to preserving the purity of Hebrew and to spreading knowledge of Hebrew grammar, he was not ready to perceive it as a secular language which was prone to modification. For that reason, he can be viewed as a more of a traditional anchor, a scholar interested in expanding his intellectual horizons through the study of grammar, poetry, and science, but without undermining the existing Jewish heritage or intermingling with the Gentiles. The travels he undertook throughout his life can serve as an indication of his intellectual profile. While he must have received a typical, traditional education in the Polish Commonwealth, he developed interests, such as Hebrew grammar and poetry, that did not match the intellectual profile of a typical Eastern-European *yeshivah* graduate. For that reason, Dubno cannot be considered a typical Eastern-European Jew of his time, but rather a truly unique

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<sup>119</sup> Schatz, "Peoples Pure of Speech", 181-187.



individual who could not find his place in his native town of Dubno and, therefore, set off for the intellectually vibrant Amsterdam. Later on, he departed from Berlin, where he turned out to be too attached to Jewish scholarly tradition to collaborate successfully with the local maskilim. Overall, he spent most of his lifetime in Amsterdam, whose Jewish intellectual community tended to be more traditional than the Prussian followers of the Jewish Enlightenment. In fact, even though Dubno was born and raised in Ukraine, thanks to his interest in Hebrew grammar and poetry his intellectual profile fit in well with that of the literary circles of Dutch Jewry, who expressed more enthusiasm for example for Dubno's poetry than his Jewish German contemporaries.

One of the questions regarding the nature of the Jewish Enlightenment is to what extent secularisation and assimilation into Gentile society were on the agenda of the maskilim, and to what extent their movement constituted a rebellion against the rabbinical elite. For example, Moshe Pelli defines the Jewish Enlightenment as a counter-culture to rabbinic tradition. He sees the publication of the *Biur* as the beginning of a new approach to the study of the Pentateuch, claiming that its main purpose was to replace the distorted rabbinical exegesis with a rational commentary, but he does not acknowledge the fact that this new commentary was based on rabbinic literature.<sup>120</sup> The work and worldview of Solomon Dubno, who never wished to undermine the rabbinical authority, cannot be inscribed in Pelli's definition of the *Haskalah*, even though Dubno played a key role in the publication of the *Biur*. This discrepancy can be explained by the fact that Dubno was not the type of radical Berlin maskil that Pelli refers to, but a

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<sup>120</sup> Pelli, *Haskalah and Beyond*.

scholar who participated in maskilic activities without renouncing, but making use of, his more traditional, religious intellectual heritage.

The claim that secularity was a central characteristic of the Age of Reason has been challenged by Alan Kors, who states that atheism was embraced by no more than a tiny minority of eighteenth-century thinkers, and by David Sorkin, who questions the portrayal of secularised thought as a hallmark of the Enlightenment period.<sup>121</sup> At the same time, Avi Lifschitz regards philosophical naturalism as the defining characteristic of the Enlightenment, arguing that the majority of Enlightenment thinkers strove to explain all aspects of human culture in terms of their natural rather than supernatural origins. Even religious thinkers, who endorsed the divine provenance of Scripture and human speech, accepted the idea of the evolution of human language and culture.<sup>122</sup>

Besides secondary literature, this study relied to a great extent on published and unpublished primary sources. The available information on Dubno's life is very scarce and only some details, such as the existence of his son, his source of income during his stay in Berlin, and the dates of his stay in Amsterdam can be retrieved from his private correspondence,<sup>123</sup> a record of income and a manuscript of his booklist of 1771.<sup>124</sup> However, Dubno's record of income was sold at an auction and its contents are known only from a

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<sup>121</sup> Alan Charles Kors, "The Atheism of d'Holbach and Naigeon" in: Micheal Hunter, David Wootton (eds), *Atheism from the Reformation to the Enlightenment* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), 273–300; David Sorkin, 'A Wise, Enlightened and Reliable Piety': *The Religious Enlightenment in Central and Western Europe, 1689-1789* (Southampton: University of Southampton: 2002).

<sup>122</sup> Avi Lifschitz, *Language and Enlightenment. The Berlin Debates of the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 5.

<sup>123</sup> [Letter of Solomon Dubno to Moses Mendelssohn, September 22, 1880] *Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana*, HS. ROS. 174; published in: *GSJ*, vol. 19, letter no. 237, 258-261.

<sup>124</sup> Solomon Dubno, *Reshimah mi-sefarim sheli* (Amsterdam: 1771), *Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana* in Amsterdam, HS. ROS. 469

summary.<sup>125</sup> As of today, there is no reliable information regarding Dubno's education before his immigration to Western Europe. The authenticity of a letter which mentions Naphali Herz as Dubno's former teacher has been questioned.<sup>126</sup> Furthermore, while many scholars evoke different cities where Dubno allegedly studied, they do not refer to any sources to support these claims.<sup>127</sup>

Dubno's poems have not been analysed in depth by scholars of Jewish literature. A number of manuscript copies of Dubno's poems have been preserved in the Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana in Amsterdam, such as "Shir le-Simḥat Torah"<sup>128</sup>, a Hebrew poem for Simhat Torah, *Yuval ve-Na'aman*,<sup>129</sup> and "Ḥidah le-Purim", a Purim riddle.<sup>130</sup> Some poems, such as *Evel yaḥid* (an elegy on the death of Jacob Emden), "Melitsot", "Se'u einekhem...", "Shir kashur min me'ah yetedot", "Shir al midat ha-ge'evah, ve-tovat midat ha-anvah" and "Shir na'eh al midat ha-ḥanupah" are available in print.<sup>131</sup> The information on Dubno's book collection is gathered from a manuscript of a booklist he composed during his lifetime<sup>132</sup> and an auction catalogue,<sup>133</sup> published a year after his death.

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<sup>125</sup> See n. 74.

<sup>126</sup> Auerbach, *Geschichte der israelitischen Gemeinde*, 179-183. For discussion of letter's content and authenticity, see: pages 187-191.

<sup>127</sup> See n. 24.

<sup>128</sup> "Shir le-Simḥat Torah", Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana, HS. ROS. 337

<sup>129</sup> *Yuval ve-Na'aman*, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana, HS. ROS. 520

<sup>130</sup> Solomon Dubno, "Ḥidah le-Purim", the last two pages of a manuscript of David Franco-Mendes' *Masekhet Purim yerushalmi* at the National Library of Israel, microfilm no. F 39482.

<sup>131</sup> *Evel yaḥid* (Berlin: 1776); "Melitsot", *Zion*, 2 (1841), 33; "Se'u einekhem..." in Yehiel Hillel ben David Altschuler, *Binyan ha-bayit* (Amsterdam: 1775), 2a-2b; "Shir kashur min me'ah yetedot", *Zion*, vol. 2, 17-18; "Shir al midat ha-ge'evah, ve-tovat midat ha-anvah", *Bikure to'elet* (Amsterdam: J. van Embden, 1820), vol. 1, 4-10; "Shir na'eh al midat ha-ḥanupah", *Zion*, vol. 1, 64; Hevrat Toelet, *Bikure to'elet* (Amsterdam: J. van Embden, 1820), vol. 1, 115.

<sup>132</sup> *Reshimah mi-sefarim sheli* (Amsterdam: 1771).

<sup>133</sup> *Reshimah mi-sefarim rabim ve-ḥashuvim* (Amsterdam: 1814).

Alexander Marx briefly described the published booklist,<sup>134</sup> but the contents of Dubno's library have not been analysed in depth before.

While conducting research on the Biur and Dubno's interest in Hebrew grammar, I analysed Solomon Dubno's published works, for example his commentary on the Book of Genesis, *Alim li-terufah*<sup>135</sup> (a prospectus of *Sefer Netivot ha-shalom*), *Birkat Yosef*<sup>136</sup> (an essay on the Prophets and the Writings sections of the Hebrew Bible), an introductory commentary to Solomon Chelm's *Sha'are ne'imah*<sup>137</sup> (a treatise on the Hebrew accents) and *Tikun soferim*<sup>138</sup> (Masoretic notes on the books of Genesis and Exodus). I also analysed a manuscript of Dubno's remarks on Mendelssohn's commentary to the Book of Exodus, which is stored at the National Library of Israel, and its text has been published in *Gesammelte Schriften: Jubiläumsausgabe*.<sup>139</sup> In addition, one of Dubno's booklets of rabbinical approvals for his unpublished Pentateuch edition was preserved at the Oriental Institute in St Petersburg and published by David Kamenetsky.<sup>140</sup> An important part of this study was to identify works which were incorrectly attributed to Dubno, such as *Kelale isur ve-heter bi-shehitah*, *Hibur al ha-tekhunah*, *ha-filosofyah ve-ha-mistorin* and *Bashraybung fun Shabsai Tsvi*.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Alexander Marx, *Studies in Jewish History and Booklore* (Farnborough, Hants., England, Westmead: Gregg International Publishers Ltd., 1969), 220-221.

<sup>135</sup> Solomon Dubno, *Alim li-terufah* (Amsterdam: Abraham ben Salomo Proops, 1778).

<sup>136</sup> Solomon Dubno, *Birkat Yosef* (Dyhernfurth: Jechiel Michael May, 1783).

<sup>137</sup> Solomon Chelm, *Sha'are ne'imah* (Frankfurt-on-Oder: 1766).

<sup>138</sup> Solomon Dubno, *Tikun soferim* (Vienna: 1793).

<sup>139</sup> The National Library of Israel, Schwadron Collection, Solomon Dubno, Schwad 01 04 24, no. 2; GSJ, vol. 19, letter no. 238, 261-273. For discussion of the authorship and contents of this document see. n. 402.

<sup>140</sup> *Pinkas ha-hatumim al ha-humashim shel rav Dubno*, the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy, St. Petersburg, Ms. A 74; Kamenetsky, David, "Haskamot gedole ha-rabanim le-humashim shel rabi Shlomo Dubno" [part 1], *Yeshurun* 8 (2001), 718-759; [part 2], *Yeshurun* 9 (2001), 711-755; [part 3], *Yeshurun* 10 (2002), 751-775.

<sup>141</sup> *Kelale isur ve-heter bi-shehitah*, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana in Amsterdam, HS. ROS. 268; *Hibur al ha-tekhunah*, *ha-filosofyah ve-ha-mistorin* (ab. 1780), Bibliotheca

I also managed to find Dubno's obituary,<sup>142</sup> whose existence was unmentioned in scholarship until now. Overall, the scarcity of primary sources was one of the biggest challenges of this project, and it may explain why no extensive research has been conducted on Solomon Dubno until now.

### **Thesis outline**

This study attempts to determine what Dubno's role was, as an early maskil from Eastern Europe, in the implementation of the publication of the *Biur* and in the shaping of the maskilic movement, and answer questions such as: what can his conflict with Mendelssohn teach us about the nature of the early Haskalah as a pluri-vocal phenomenon? How can Dubno's intellectual profile and output be described in the context of the Jewish Enlightenment? Taking into account his Eastern-European origin and education, and the fact that he spent most of his life in Berlin and Amsterdam, where exactly does he belong on the geographical and intellectual map of the eighteenth-century Jewish scholarship? What was original about his work and did it have any influence on other authors and thinkers?

Chapter one of this thesis is concerned with Dubno as a book collector and seller. His private library constituted one of the largest Hebrew book collections in Amsterdam of his time. Its contents are known to us from a public auction catalogue, which was published in 1814, a year after Dubno's death. It reflects the literary collection that Dubno managed to amass during his lifetime

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Rosenthaliana, HS. ROS. 577; *Bashraybung fun Shabsai Tsvi*, Ets Hayim Library, cat. no. EH 47 E 27 01.

<sup>142</sup> Centraal Bureau voor Genealogie, Den Haag, no. VFADNL027170-1, record date: 23.06.1813.

and includes 2076 printed volumes and 106 manuscripts. Since Dubno worked as a bookseller, and the analysed document is an action catalogue, it needs to be emphasised that many of the listed books might not necessarily be evidence of Dubno's personal interests, but a reflection of the current demands of the Amsterdam Jewish book market and were, from the very beginning, destined for sale. By contrast, a booklist compiled by him in 1771 can be believed to reflect exclusively his own interests.

Except for a handful of books in German, Ladino and Judeo-German, all the works in Dubno's booklist were in Hebrew and they encompassed disciplines such as liturgy, the Bible and its commentaries, *halakhah*, midrashic compilations, ethics, poetry, Kabbalah, grammar, philosophy, as well as belles-lettres, mathematics, astronomy, medicine and geography. Although the majority of these volumes were devoted to rabbinical subjects, the sales inventory reveals a prominent presence of maskilic books. In fact, as much as one-sixth of Dubno's collection pertains to non-religious subjects and might suggest that most of those books were meant for sale and did not constitute Dubno's private collection. The assumption that the non-rabbinical books made part of a sales catalogue is also supported by the fact that Dubno quoted only a few of them in his writings,<sup>143</sup> and there is no evidence that he familiarised himself with the content of the majority of them. The reading of non-rabbinical works was often criticised by the rabbinical elite as neglect of Torah study. However, the fact that many such books appear in the booklist of 1771 might suggest that, despite being famous for his piety, he was much more liberal than the majority of Eastern-European scholars of that time. This chapter also compares Dubno's booklists with the libraries of other

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<sup>143</sup> See pages 150-151.

contemporary Jewish intellectuals, including German and Dutch maskilim on the one hand and Eastern-European rabbis on the other, which makes it possible to position Dubno between these two types of book collectors. This analysis of Dubno's collection thus allows us to circumscribe the intellectual universe and development of a religious maskil.

The subject of the second chapter is Dubno's work with Moses Mendelssohn on the German Pentateuch translation with commentary, which had a far-reaching impact not only on other maskilim who were active at that time, but on European Jewry in general, as well as on subsequent generations of German Jews. Many Haskalah scholars consider it one of Mendelssohn's greatest achievements.<sup>144</sup> The focus of this chapter is Dubno's work on the *Biur*, as well as the reasons for his withdrawal from the project, and the judgement of his involvement in the Berlin Haskalah by both fellow maskilim and contemporary opponents of the German Pentateuch translation. Much of this chapter is a perusal of Dubno's unpublished notes and private letters written by or about him. They suggest that his role in the project has often been underestimated by Haskalah historians, especially in regard to the authorship of *Alim li-terufah*, the prospectus accompanying *Sefer netivot ha-shalom*, which is often attributed to Mendelssohn, even though it was signed by Dubno and expressed views that were more in line with his traditionalist worldview than with the Enlightenment ideas espoused by Mendelssohn. Furthermore, Dubno's letter to Mendelssohn of September 22, 1780 reveals inconsistencies in the latter's claim that Dubno had no good reason for withdrawing from his share in the publication of the *Biur*.<sup>145</sup> In

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<sup>144</sup> Heinrich Graetz, *History of the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1949), vol. 5, 329-336.

<sup>145</sup> GSJ, vol. 19, letter no. 237, 258-261.

fact, it seems that Mendelssohn was partly responsible for Dubno's frustration with the project, starting with his failure to keep his promise to publish Dubno's introduction to the work, and ending with his financial mismanagement, as a result of which Dubno was not paid for much of the work he had devoted to the Biur. Furthermore, this chapter attempts to show that the main reason for Dubno's withdrawal from the project was a discrepancy in his and Mendelssohn's expectations of the publication, which reflects two opposing, maskilic visions regarding the study of the Hebrew Pentateuch.

Chapter three explores from a number of perspectives Dubno's linguistic outlook, which -- thanks to his work on the Biur project, and through his poetic writings -- had a role in drawing interest to the study of the Hebrew language and its grammar. Dubno attributed to Hebrew a great aesthetic quality, and while seeing it as a direct link with the ancient Israelites and their literary heritage, he believed in its artistic potential and usefulness for contemporary Jews. Consequently, he emphasised the importance of studying grammar and preserving the purity of the holy tongue. While he usually abstained from reading linguistic treatises penned by non-Jews, it is instructive to compare his opinions, influenced by the study of medieval and early-modern works on Hebrew grammar, with the eighteenth-century development of the field of linguistics and the proliferation of literary creations in national languages. This chapter further analyses the extant excerpts from Dubno's introduction to the Biur, which Mendelssohn refused to publish as it was too focused on the subject of grammar. The analysis of this work reveals Dubno's beliefs regarding the study of Hebrew, which were influenced by the study of kabbalistic works and other religious texts. Despite the fact that Mendelssohn rejected Dubno's introductory essay for



publication, comparison between this essay and Mendelssohn's *Or la-netivah* shows similarities with Dubno's work.

The fourth chapter analyses Dubno's poetic writings, which cover several genres, including an elegy, an epithalamium, a Purim riddle, as well as some didactic works. Many of them are occasional poems, composition of which was a common pastime among Sephardic Jews of Amsterdam at that time. Although poetry writing was considered by the rabbis neglect of Torah study, Dubno was proud of being a poet and composed verse not only by commission, in order to support himself, but also for personal pleasure. Through these literary endeavours, he aimed to prove that this ancient language was still fit for artistic expression. Some of his poems, however, are more of a linguistic curiosity than an artistic achievement, and it seems that his aim was to exploit poetry as a didactic tool, praising virtue and condemning such vices as pride and hypocrisy, or warning against acculturation in Gentile society. His *Yuval ve-Na'aman*, a short story enriched by a number of poems, makes a direct connection between biblical poetry and the Hebrew literature in the Dutch Republic.<sup>146</sup> Since this particular work was composed after his withdrawal from the *Biur* project, it can serve as proof that his adherence to the ideals of the renewal of the Hebrew language and literature were independent from the ideas embraced by Mendelssohn and the Berlin maskilim.

This chapter also discusses writings that were falsely attributed to Dubno after his death, which suggest the need to revise our notion of his literary output

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<sup>146</sup> I use the term "Hebrew renewal" to denote a deliberate attempt on the part of maskilim to modernise and enrich Hebrew vocabulary and to standardise the Hebrew grammar. The term has been borrowed from Andrea Schatz, *Sprache in der Zerstreung*, 192 ("die Erneuerung der hebräischen Sprache").

and his opinion of Mendelssohn's translation. These false attributions include a scientific treatise and a halakhic composition, as well as a book on the Holy Land, which led to his being posthumously accused of plagiarism. While Dubno's genuine works were focused entirely on Hebrew grammar, grammatical commentary and poetry, these false attributions have expanded the scope of his literary output, making him appear more versatile than he ever was. Furthermore, a letter allegedly written by Dubno, in which he supposedly praised the Biur several years after leaving Berlin and abandoning the project, is probably a forgery authored by the Rabbi Benjamin Hirsch Auerbach (1808-1872). Since Auerbach, who preached his sermons only in German, wanted to promote the use of German among the Jews, he may well have had a personal interest in falsifying a letter in which Dubno, a scholar who was renowned for his piety, appears to express support for the publication of the German Pentateuch translation. Since this letter has often been taken to be authentic, the forgery has influenced the scholarly view of Dubno's motivations.

This study tries to prove that Dubno who, being a religious Jew from Eastern Europe with a different worldview than the one advocated by the Berlin maskilim, was also a member of the early Haskalah. It argues that the early Jewish Enlightenment should not be perceived as a static and uniform movement, limited to a few locations, but as a multifarious phenomenon that was characteristic to the Jewish Diaspora in Europe and included individuals with heterogenous views.<sup>147</sup> While this study relies on the work of numerous scholars, the views of Shmuel Feiner, David Sorkin and Eliyahu Stern were of particular relevance. Shmuel Feiner believes that the intellectual accomplishments of the

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<sup>147</sup> Schatz, "Peoples Pure of Speech", 169-187.

age achieved by Gentiles were often of a secondary importance in shaping the programme of the Haskalah. Both Jewish and non-Jewish movements share a great number of core values, such as the struggle for social justice, education, rationalism, and often religious tolerance.<sup>148</sup> In his *Jewish Enlightenment*, he presents a comprehensive study of the German Haskalah with a particular focus on its literary output composed in Hebrew. Feiner draws attention to the calls of Jewish intellectuals for reinvigoration of the Jewish culture and the feeling of inferiority experienced by many maskilim who were familiar with the achievements of the Gentile society and who wished to broaden the scopes of the Jewish library by including in it scientific works and to shift the focus of study from religious to secular texts. Consequently, maskilim challenged the social status quo within the Jewish community in which religious authorities held monopoly in outlining the scopes of education. However, they did not reject Judaism as such, and tried to find a way to combine their religious beliefs with a modern worldview.

According to David Sorkin, the first maskilim were observant Jews who remained faithful to their religious tradition, and who at the same time embraced the study of subjects that were absent from the traditional curriculum of religious education. They revived understudied fields of learning such as biblical exegesis, philosophy and grammar, and introduced a new focus on modern scientific discoveries.<sup>149</sup> Their goal, while remaining strongly attached to their faith, was to

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<sup>148</sup> Feiner, *The Jewish Enlightenment*, 3.

<sup>149</sup> Sorkin, *The Berlin Haskalah*, 62; idem, "The Early Haskalah" in: Shmuel Feiner, David Sorkin (eds), *New Perspectives on the Haskalah* (London: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2001), 9-26.

spread rationalist and humanist values in Jewish society.<sup>150</sup> This involved the effort to create the scientific vocabulary that existed in modern languages but was absent from the Hebrew lexicon.<sup>151</sup> The early maskilim aspired to reinvigorate what Sorkin labels “baroque” Judaism, by which he means the rabbinic tradition that flourished between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries and was characterised by the predominance of *pilpul* in Talmudic study, the prominence of Kabbalah in the realm of theology, and the lack of interest in medieval philosophy, Hebrew language and secular sciences. Following this line of thought, Sorkin argues that the Haskalah was not a rebellion against the rabbinical elite, but an attempt to modernise the religious worldview prevailing in Jewish society.<sup>152</sup> While many maskilim shared the desire to modernise Jewish education, some of them approached this task with a great degree of cautiousness. Dubno, who amassed an impressive library and was devoted to the study of Hebrew grammar, owned almost no Gentile books and was mistrustful of the Mendelssohnian circle, many of whose members, such as David Friedländer or Markus Herz, were ready to abandon religious observance in order to gain recognition in non-Jewish society.<sup>153</sup>

Eliahu Stern challenges Max Weber’s division into dynamic modernity and static traditionalism,<sup>154</sup> a template which was frequently applied in reference to the German maskilim on the one hand, and to traditional Eastern European Jewry

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<sup>150</sup> Shmuel Feiner, “Ha-haskalah ha-mukdemet be-yahadut ha-me’ah ha-shmoneh-esreh”, *Tarbiz* 67.2 (1998), 189-240.

<sup>151</sup> Pelli, “Literature of Haskalah in the late 18th Century”, 335.

<sup>152</sup> David Sorkin, “From Context to Comparison. The German Haskalah and Reform Catholicism”, in: Shulamit Volkov, Frank Stern (eds), *Tel-Aviver Jahrbuch für deutsche Geschichte* 20 (1991), 23-58.

<sup>153</sup> Feiner, *The Jewish Enlightenment*, 315, 318-320, 332.

<sup>154</sup> Stern, *The Genius: Elijah of Vilna*, 8, 166-167.

on the other.<sup>155</sup> In his book, *The Genius. Elijah of Vilna and the Making of Modern Judaism*, he depicts the intellectual vibrancy of eighteenth-century Vilna. His analysis of the works of the Vilna Gaon shows that the Eastern European rabbi often opposed the views expressed in rabbinical texts, which in some respects made him a more rebellious thinker than Moses Mendelssohn.<sup>156</sup> This phenomenon is not surprising, if one considers the Jewish demographics of that time: while Berlin hosted only a small number of Jews,<sup>157</sup> cities like Vilna and Lviv were to a great extent dominated by Jewish residents.<sup>158</sup> Since one of the main aims of Mendelssohn was to achieve a better social status of Prussian Jews, he felt obliged to justify the principles of Judaism to the German intellectuals, and, in comparison to the Vilna Gaon, he could enjoy less freedom of thought regarding criticism of some Jewish texts. Stern criticises unreflective analysis of the culture of Polish Jews, who are often presented through the prism of phenomena that occurred in the West, such as assimilation and religious reform, but were absent from, and therefore irrelevant to, the Jewish community in Eastern Europe. Stern objects to defining modernity as secularisation and, like Hundert, emphasises that the Enlightenment resulted in the creation of all kinds of ideologies, including Haskala, Hasidism, the mitnagdic movement and Zionism.

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<sup>155</sup> See for example: Katz, *Tradition and Crisis*; Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz, *The Jew in the Modern World*.

<sup>156</sup> Stern, *The Genius*, 64-65.

<sup>157</sup> In 1750 there were between 3,000 and 3,500 Jews in Old Berlin. The population of the city at that time amounted to 22,000 inhabitants, while the regional Berlin counted 120,000 residents. Herz, *Jewish High Society in Old Regime Berlin*, 16.

<sup>158</sup> Between 3,500 and 4,000 Jews lived in the city of Vilna, while the Jewish residents in the Vilnius voivodeship amounted to approximately 5,500, which comprised 30% of the population. Klausner, *Toldot ha-kehilah ha-ivrit*, 46-53.

The analysis of the conflict that emerged between Dubno and Mendelssohn during their work on the Biur can shed light on the early Haskalah as a plurivocal endeavour, in which various, often contradictory, visions intertwined and, at times, clashed. Dubno and Mendelssohn were connected by a shared textual tradition and common goal to increase the Hebrew literacy and knowledge of the Hebrew Bible among the Jewish population, which enabled them to embark on a joint undertaking, publishing the German Pentateuch translation with a commentary. However, their prolonged collaboration revealed the profound discrepancies of their visions. While Dubno, just as most of the early maskilim, wished to retain a moderate approach that would not undermine the existing order, Mendelssohn was ready to adopt a more radical stance, even if that meant coming into conflict with more conservative rabbis. Mendelssohn's unwillingness to compromise on his idea to teach the Pentateuch by means of a sophisticated translation in high German can be interpreted as a step into modernity, which Dubno did not want to take. When Mendelssohn published the first volume of the Biur and faced the criticism of the rabbis, Dubno set off for a journey in Eastern Europe in search of support for his own Pentateuch edition, which would include a commentary and grammatical clarification without any translation into a modern language. In this way, in contrast to Mendelssohn, he would forever remain a follower of the early Haskalah.

## **Chapter 1: Solomon Dubno's booklists**

### **Introduction**

Solomon Dubno was known not only for his poetry, works on Hebrew grammar, and for his participation in writing a grammatical commentary for Mendelssohn's Pentateuch translation, but also as a book seller and a distinguished book collector. This chapter sets out to analyse the content of Solomon Dubno's booklist through the prism of his academic background. It aspires to demonstrate the vast arrays of interest and multifaceted erudition of an eighteenth-century intellectual, who, as a result of his travels to different cultural centres in Eastern and Western Europe, found himself under the influence of German maskilim (the followers of the Jewish Enlightenment), Amsterdam Jews, and members of the Polish rabbinical elite.

The content of Dubno's library is known to us from two documents: a booklist compiled by Dubno in 1771 and a catalogue of the public auction of his books, which was published in 1814, after his death, and is still extant in a few copies.<sup>159</sup> The interpretation of the latter document is particularly difficult, as it is not clear whether it reflects Dubno's personal interests or if the catalogue lists works that were, from the very beginning, meant to be sold by Dubno to his customers. On the one hand, it is doubtful whether Dubno, who lived in poverty, could have afforded to own such a huge collection.<sup>160</sup> The length of the booklist

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<sup>159</sup> It is unknown how many copies of the catalogue were published. Fourteen of them can be found in three countries, for example in the British Library, National Library of Israel, Institut für Europäische Geschichte in Mainz and the City and University Library of Frankfurt am Main.

<sup>160</sup> See pages 74-75.

(2076 books and 106 manuscripts) is one of the main arguments in favour of interpreting the document as a sales catalogue rather than as Dubno's private collection. It is known that at the end of his life he would rent his books to other scholars to support himself.<sup>161</sup> The sales catalogue encompasses a large number of rabbinical works, as well as books of grammar, biblical exegesis, and history, which, judging from the content of eighteenth-century book catalogues, were commonly purchased by Dutch Jewish intellectuals.<sup>162</sup> On the other hand, these were books that Dubno himself needed in his own scholarly work. The list also includes Dubno's notes on his work on the Biur and his private correspondence.<sup>163</sup> In fact, the catalogue has always been interpreted as Dubno's personal collection rather than a list of books that he tried to sell during his lifetime.<sup>164</sup> This approach seems to be reasonable, taking into account that the books that appear in the auction catalogue are works that Dubno himself would read — some of the listed works can be identified today as the former property of Dubno thanks to the notes he left on the margins of his books.<sup>165</sup> In

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<sup>161</sup> One of his clients was Süsskind ben Mendel Tal, who took notes from Dubno's library in 1808. See: Ets Hayim Library, cat. no. EH 47 E 27 02.

<sup>162</sup> For example, booklists of Moses Teixeira de Mattos of 1768 and Solomon Cohen Samuelsz of 1786, comprise both traditional Jewish books, as well as books on history and grammar, including maskilic publications. See: Zwiep, "Jewish Enlightenment Reconsidered", 299, 306.

<sup>163</sup> RS, *kitve yadot* 67, no. 27.

<sup>164</sup> Marx, *Studies in Jewish History and Booklore*, 219-221; Kamenetsky, "Haskamot gedole ha-rabanim" [part 1], 719; Hagit Cohen, "The Reception of 'Haskalah' Literature (Jewish Enlightenment) in Amsterdam in the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century. A Perspective from Abraham Keyser's Library (1805)", *Studia Rosenthaliana, Reading Texts on Jews and Judaism in the Low Countries*, 42/43 (2010-2011), 83-105.

<sup>165</sup> See n. 219.



*Birkat Yosef*, Dubno lists sixteen works that he consulted in writing *Tikun soferim*.<sup>166</sup> All but four of them appear in the auction catalogue.<sup>167</sup>

It is interesting to compare the sales catalogue with the booklist compiled by Dubno in 1771. The former was compiled by a professional bookseller after Dubno's death, who tried to advertise the items on auction by emphasising their beauty and drawing attention to old editions. The list he composed is arranged according to size of books and in alphabetical order, without concern for genres and subjects of works. The latter, created by Dubno himself, has a highly personal dimension. The books are arranged according to subjects and each title is accompanied by Dubno's comment on its content. The list also includes Dubno's portrait and a short poem. While these two documents are different in character, their overall profile is similar and the vast majority of the books from Dubno's early collection appear in the inventory list composed after his death. Similar to the auction catalogue, the majority of items on the 1771 booklist are rabbinical works. Both lists include several compositions on history, science, grammar and Masoretic punctuation. Among the items that appear in the earlier list, but are missing from the auction catalogue, are *Sipure Erets ha-Galil* by Simha ben Joshua Haas of Zloczow, which was given to the Lehen family during Dubno's lifetime,<sup>168</sup> and *Zikhron Yerushalayim* by Yehudah Paliastri (Amsterdam: 1759), a guide to holy places in Palestine.

Dubno's book collection of grammar, poetry and secular knowledge does not seem unusual if compared to the intellectual profile of Wolf Heidenheim,

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<sup>166</sup> See pages 154-155.

<sup>167</sup> The missing titles are: *Minḥat Kohen* by Yosef Shneuer ha-Cohen, *Sefer Seder Avraham* by Abraham Abele ben Jeremiah, [*kuntres ha-hakhra'ot*] by Raphael Ḥayyim Basila (perhaps his commentary to Norzi's *Minḥat shai*), *Sefer shemen Sasson* by Yosef Sasson.

<sup>168</sup> See pages 294-297.

whose private library is very similar in content. Heidenheim, a religious German Jew who was interested in Masoretic punctuation and who published a revised *Mahzor* edition with German translation, had similar interests to Dubno and possessed 55 kabbalistic works, 33 volumes of poetry and belles-lettres, 55 books on science and history, and 74 works on grammar and dictionaries. While his book collection was smaller than Dubno's (827 items), proportionately the non-rabbinical subjects formed a bigger part of his library (one-fifth of all the books) than in the case of Dubno (about one-sixth of books). Although they seem to have a similar number of books on science, history, and grammar, Dubno amassed a twice larger collection of Hebrew poetry, and three times as many books on Kabbalah, which is the most striking feature of his book collection.<sup>169</sup>

Due to the resemblance between the two booklists, this study interprets the sales inventory of 1814 as predominantly a reflection of Dubno's personal interests. At the same time, it acknowledges that it had been shaped to some extent by Dubno's bookselling activity and the demands of the contemporary Jewish book market, which might explain the presence of some more expensive editions. It is doubtful that Dubno, who died at the age of 75 years, was still actively engaged in bookselling at the end of his life. For that reason, the vast majority of the books he left after his death must have formed a part of his private collection and attest to his own scholarly and literary interests.

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<sup>169</sup> See pages 118-122 for further comparison of Dubno's library with other book collections.

## Book collecting in early modern times

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw a dynamic development of libraries and book collections in Europe. Jonathan Israel has called them the workshop of the Enlightenment, as they provided inspiration for new ideas. The study of prohibited books and the publication of several dictionaries and encyclopaedias, giving an insight into a wide array of scholarly disciplines, were the hallmarks of the intellectual revolution of the period. The concept of a post-confessional library covering all fields of knowledge, including expressions of both traditional views and new discoveries, was first propagated by the French librarian and scholar Gabriel Naudé (1600-1653) in 1627 in his *Advis pour dresser une bibliothèque*, a work which paved the way for the development of modern book collections, both public and private. Many universities, state libraries and affluent individuals followed in Naudé's footsteps.<sup>170</sup> Members of the Republic of Letters, as the international community of men of learning was soon to be known,<sup>171</sup> would exchange knowledge and criticise each other's scholarly activity on equal terms outside of any official or social organisation. This situation allowed for the free flow of knowledge between scholars, regardless of their place of residence or confessional background.<sup>172</sup> Participation in the Republic of Letters did not require the embracement of the Enlightenment ideas or a profound

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<sup>170</sup> Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 120-123; Gabriel Naudé, *Advis pour dresser une bibliothèque* (Paris: Targa, 1627).

<sup>171</sup> The term *respublica literaria* was used since the fifteenth century. It was first translated from Latin by Pierre Bayle in 1664 in his *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres*. See: Ann Goldgar, *Impolite Learning: Conduct and Community in the Republic of Letters, 1680-1750* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 2; and Patrick J. Lambe, "Critics and Skeptics in the Seventeenth-Century Republic of Letters", *The Harvard Theological Review* 81.3 (Jul., 1988), 273.

<sup>172</sup> Goldgar, *Impolite Learning*, 2-3.

knowledge of the works of the most eminent representatives of the movement. As Laurence Brockliss shows with the example of Esprit Calvet, a doctor, bibliophile and a natural historian, one could be a member of the Republic of Letters without identifying with Enlightenment thought.<sup>173</sup>

At the end of the seventeenth century, questioning the existing order and the quest for novelty pushed men of means to travel to foreign lands and resulted in the proliferation of travelogues.<sup>174</sup> The *voyage littéraire* was a common undertaking among scholars of the early modern age, who would travel to foreign cultural centres in order to purchase books and meet renowned savants. The phenomenon can be exemplified by such individuals as Ludvig Holberg (1684–1754), who visited the libraries of Paris and Rome in 1714-1715, and in the Jewish world, by Solomon Maimon, who left Eastern Europe for Germany for this purpose, as well as Judah Hurwitz (1734-1797), Barukh Schick, Solomon Dubno, Menahem Mendel Lefin, and many others.<sup>175</sup>

This spirit of a new age affected the reading interests of the Jewish scholars. A vast number of works that appeared at that time consisted of books written or translated by maskilim, as well as of reprinted old volumes, which were not easily available any more. This literary activity was aimed to promote education and moral improvement.<sup>176</sup> While book collecting was common in

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<sup>173</sup> Laurence Brockliss, *Calvet's Web. Enlightenment and the Republic of Letters in Eighteenth-Century France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>174</sup> Paul Hazard, *La crise de la conscience européenne (1680-1715)* (Paris: Fayard, 1961), 3-25.

<sup>175</sup> Feiner, "Ha-haskalah ha-mukdemet", 189-240; Yaacob Dweck, *The Scandal of Kabbalah: Leon Modena, Jewish Mysticism, Early Modern Venice* (Princeton, New York: Princeton University Press, 2011), 199-200.

<sup>176</sup> Feiner, *The Jewish Enlightenment*, 44.

Jewish communities throughout history,<sup>177</sup> the reduced costs of printing in the early modern period enabled more individuals to purchase more books.<sup>178</sup> The phenomenon of bibliophilia among the Jewish population can be exemplified by prominent court Jews such as Samuel Wertheimer (1630-1703), Süss Oppenheimer (1698?-1738), and Rabbi David Oppenheim (1664-1736). The scarcity of sources makes it difficult to compare Dubno's library with other Eastern-European Jewish book collections, either private or public, but such comparisons can be drawn with several extant catalogues of Jewish libraries in the West. Amsterdam, as the main book trade centre of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe, was home to many renowned Jewish collectors. Their sale catalogues give us an insight into the magnitude and variety of some of these Dutch private libraries. Samuel Abbas (d. 1693) owned 1136 prints: 287 in Hebrew, 421 in Latin, 248 in French, 168 in Spanish and Portuguese, and 113 in Italian. Of the Nunes Torres's (1660-1728) collection only books in foreign languages were put up for sale by public auction after his death. They included 1,525 volumes: 526 in French, 324 in Latin, 289 in Spanish, 265 in Dutch, 34 in Portuguese, as well as a few books in Italian, Dutch and German. The sale catalogue of the library of Isaac Aboab de Fonseca (1605-1693) included 114 items in Greek and Latin,<sup>179</sup> while the famous Ets Hayim library, storing 246

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<sup>177</sup> See for example: Shifra Baruchson-Arbib, *Sefarim ve-korim: tarbut ha-keriah shel yehude Italyah be-shilhe ha-Renesans* (Ramat-Gan: Universitat Bar-Ilan, 1993); Cecil Roth, *A Seventeenth-Century Jewish Library and Trousseau. Studies in Jewish Bibliography in Memory of Abraham S. Friedus* (New York: Alexander Kohut Memorial Foundation, 1929); Isaiah Sonne, "Book Lists through Three Centuries" in: *Studies in Bibliography and Booklore* 1.2 (December 1, 1953), 55-76.

<sup>178</sup> Avriel Bar-Levav, "Amsterdam and the Inception of the Jewish Republic of Letters," in: Yosef Kaplan (ed.), *The Dutch Intersection: the Jews and the Netherlands in Modern History* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 229.

<sup>179</sup> Whether the appendix, consisting of Greek and Latin works, constituted an integral part of Isaac Aboab de Fonseca's collection is a disputed question. For research

printed books in 1639 and 167 manuscripts in 1640, consisted mainly of rabbinic literature.<sup>180</sup> Heimann Michael of Hamburg (1792-1846) amassed six to seven thousand volumes.<sup>181</sup> David Oppenheim (d. 1736), rabbi of Nikolsburg and Prague, possessed a collection of about 7,000 prints and 1,000 manuscripts, which constituted the largest Jewish library at that time.<sup>182</sup> We also know that, for instance, Simon Bondi (d. 1817 in Dresden) owned 825 books, Anshel Norden da Lima possessed 561 prints and manuscripts (auctioned in 1830 in Amsterdam), Wolf Heidenheim had 872 volumes (auctioned in 1832 in Roedelheim) and Man van Essen owned 720 books (auctioned in 1839 in Hamburg).<sup>183</sup> In eighteenth-century Poland, *bate midrash* (study halls of synagogues or *yeshivot*) stored the largest collections of Hebrew books and were often the main source of knowledge for their users. The inventory of the study hall of Volozhin, dated 1762, contains 87 titles in 14 volumes, which shows the modesty of Eastern-European collections, and explains why many Polish Jewish scholars decided to emigrate westward in order to pursue their studies.<sup>184</sup> In

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suggesting that it was, see Yosef Kaplan, “Sifriyotehem shel sheloshah rabanim sefaradim be-ma’arav Eiropah be-et ha-ḥadashah ha-mukdemet” in: Yosef Kaplan, Moshe Sluhovsky (eds), *Sifriyot ve-osfe sefarim* (Jerusalem: the Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, 2006), 225-260. For the suggestion that these books were added to the list by the auction organiser, see Shlomo Berger, “Codices Gentium: Rabbi Isaac Aboab's Collection of Classical Literature”, *Studia Rosenthaliana* 29.1 (1995), 5, n. 4.

<sup>180</sup> Yosef Kaplan, “Sifriyotehem”, 225-227; Lajb Fuks, Renate G. Fuks-Mansfeld (ed.), *Aspects of Jewish Life in the Netherlands: a Selection from the Writings of Leo Fuks* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1995), 40-41.

<sup>181</sup> “Book collectors” in: *The Jewish Encyclopaedia* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1901-1906), vol. 3, 310-312.

<sup>182</sup> Joshua Z. Teplitsky, *Between Court Jew and Jewish Court: David Oppenheim, the Prague Rabbinate, and Eighteenth-century Jewish Political Culture* (PhD dissertation, New York University: 2012), 7.

<sup>183</sup> Leopold Zunz, *Zur Geschichte und Literatur* (Berlin: Veit, 1845), 241-242.

<sup>184</sup> Gershon David Hundert, “The Library of the Study Hall in Volozhin, 1762: Some Notes on the Basis of a Newly Discovered Manuscript”, *Jewish History* 14.2 (May 2000), 225-244.

addition, two Christian collections are worth mentioning as a point of reference; Giovanni Bernardo De Rossi (1742-1831), possessed more than one thousand manuscripts, while Johann Christian Wolf (1683–1739) amassed 25,000 books, including several Hebrew works.<sup>185</sup>

## **The contents of Solomon Dubno's library**

### **i. General overview**

Dubno's inventory is still impressive in comparison with collections gathered by his contemporaries. His booklist includes 2076 printed volumes and 106 manuscripts and encompasses disciplines such as liturgy (*hagadot*, *maḥzorim*, *seliḥot*, *sidurim*, *teḥinot* etc.), the Bible and its commentaries, *halakhah* (Talmud tractates with commentaries, novellae, responsa and collectanea), midrashic compilations, ethics, poetry, Kabbalah, grammar, philosophy, as well as belles-lettres, mathematics, astronomy, medicine and geography.<sup>186</sup> The catalogue of Dubno's books consists of 61 pages. The items are divided into four groups, which are subdivided into three classes by standard volume size, and within each class the items are listed alphabetically in a separate numerical sequence. The first group – by far the largest (pp. 1-55) – is of printed books subdivided by size as follows: folio (571 items), quarto (884 items), and octavo (539 items), with all three classes amounting together to 1994

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<sup>185</sup> "Book collectors", *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 3, 310-312; Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 132.

<sup>186</sup> It can be estimated that about one-sixth of the titles in Dubno's booklist refer to non-rabbinical subjects. It is not possible to give exact numbers, as in many cases only the title of a work is known, which can correspond to several different publications.

items. The second group (pp. 55-57) is somewhat enigmatically labeled “*nishmatim*” (literally: fallen out, left out, dropped or omitted) and similarly subdivided into folio (8 items), quarto (20 items) and octavo (41 items), all three amounting together to 69 items. It encompasses different genres and subjects, and it seems to be a random collection of books that were left out.<sup>187</sup> It includes books of halakhah, rabbinic responsa, *hagadot*, commentaries to Talmud and the Hebrew Bible, homiletics, ethics, liturgy (e.g. *Ma’aneh lashon* by Ya’acov ben Abraham Solomon with Yiddish translation (Amsterdam: Proops, 1723)), Kabbalah (e.g. *Or Ne’erav* by Moses Cordovero, printed for the first time in Venice in 1587, and *Ta’ame ha-mitsvot* by Menahem ben Benjamin Recanati (printed for the first time in Basil, 1580/81)), grammar (*Yesod leshon ha-kodesh* (Wilmsdorf: 1724) with German translation), poetry (*Ayumah ka-nidgalot* by Isaac ben Samuel Onkeneira [Berlin: 1801], and *Gemul Atalia* by the Amsterdam maskil, *Gilat ve-ranen* by David Franco Mendes (Amsterdam: 1776-77)). It also includes two non-Jewish books on geography: *Biblischer Geographus* by Johann Jacob Schmidt (Züllichau: 1740), and *Erdebeschreibung* by Anton Friedrich Büsching (Hamburg: 1768). Furthermore, it comprises a number of issues of *Ha-Me’asef*, the first volume of *Sefer netivot ha-shalom* on the Book of Genesis, *Galut Yehudah*, a Hebrew-Italian dictionary by Leon Modena [Venice: 1612], as well as *Kelil ha-ḥeshbon* by David Friesenhausen (Berlin: 1796), a book on

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<sup>187</sup> Ada Rapoport-Albert has suggested, that the term “*nishmatim*” may refer to books that were inadvertently omitted from the list when it was first assembled by the creator of the catalogue, and then grouped together at the end of the list of printed items. Alternatively, it may just conceivably refer to sections of books, which may have fallen out and were therefore missing from the volumes in which they were originally bound.



mathematics, and *Sefer ha-hizayon* by Isaac Satanow (Berlin, 1775), which deals with poetry and different scientific topics.

The next group is labeled “unbound” (*bilti mekhorakhim*), encompassing 13 items,<sup>188</sup> and the last group (pp. 57-61), labeled “manuscripts” (*kitve yadot*), comprises 10 folio, 64 quarto, and 32 octavo items, amounting altogether to 106 manuscript volumes. Some of the titles appear several times in different formats, while in many cases a few works are bound together and sold as a single book.<sup>189</sup> Most items are listed by title only, although sometimes the place of publication is mentioned as well,<sup>190</sup> while the author’s name appears very infrequently, and there are only a few comments here and there on the material condition or general appearance of a particular volume.

The inventory was compiled by a person named J. Spiegelmann and published in 1814, several months after Dubno’s death on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June 1813.<sup>191</sup> For this reason, one cannot be certain that it included all the books he

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<sup>188</sup> At that time books were often sold unbound. The purchaser of a book would have to pay separately for having the volume bound. See Hundert, “The Library of the Study Hall in Volozhin”, 226-227.

<sup>189</sup> We can cautiously estimate that the list contains about 1,880 different titles. Approximately 267 books were owned by Dubno in more than one copy. Since in most cases we know only the title of a volume, sometimes it is impossible to assess if the compiler listed different books that had the same title, different editions of the same item, or if Dubno owned a few copies of a particular composition. In addition, we may assume a certain degree of a negligence on the part of the compiler, who, without specifying it, in certain cases might have listed different parts of a book under a few entries. For that reason, these numbers cannot be treated as exact.

<sup>190</sup> The date of publication is rarely indicated in the booklist. However, when the place of publication is provided, it is sometimes possible to identify the likely edition in Dubno’s possession. Whenever it is impossible to determine the edition, I provide the details of the earliest edition.

<sup>191</sup> Alexander Marx, *Studies in Jewish History and Booklore* (Farnborough, Hants., England, Westmead: Gregg International Publishers Ltd., 1969), 219, n. 66. The copies of the catalogue owned by the British Library and the University of Frankfurt, which I used for this study, do not include this information. Malakhi Beit-Arie states that in the copy of the catalogue that he studied, a legal guardian is mentioned, who had been appointed to sell Dubno’s inheritance. See: Malakhi Beit-Arie, “Sefatayim dovevot

possessed, since some of the volumes might have been sold before the sale took place. The auction started on the 13th of July 1814 and lasted for three days.<sup>192</sup> We have no information as to how many of the books were sold and to whom. However, it seems that in 1821, some of the manuscripts listed were still owned by Dubno's son, Abraham Moses, who advertised them to potential publishers in a newspaper.<sup>193</sup>

One may wonder how a poor scholar like Dubno could manage to amass such an impressive book collection. In his catalogue of 1771 Dubno reported that he owned 350 books.<sup>194</sup> Since the auction catalogue of 1814 enumerates 2182 volumes, we can conclude that for most of his life he must have acquired on average the impressive number of 44 books per year. By contrast, we know from his private correspondence that he suffered great financial difficulties,<sup>195</sup> and by the end of his life, in declining health, he was forced to make a living as a book lender. According to Carmoly, his clients were "amateurs of Jewish literature", and it is possible that they were of both Ashkenazic and Sephardic origins, as Dubno was involved in the affairs of both communities.<sup>196</sup> Men of letters sustaining themselves by scholarly activities were usually poorly paid for their labour. The book collection belonging to Wolf Heidenheim, a friend of Dubno's who founded the first modern Jewish printing house in Rödelheim, was similarly

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(hagahot ve-hashlamot bi-khetivat-yad le-sifte yeshenim)", *Kiryat Sefer* 40 (1964/65), 127.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Fürst, *Der Orient*, vol. 8, 178-179. Among the manuscripts that he managed to publish was *Milhamot ha-Shem* by Abraham ben Moses ben Maimon, published in Vilna in 1821.

<sup>194</sup> The catalogue remains in manuscript. *Reshimah mi-sefarim sheli* (Amsterdam: 1771), Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana, HS. ROS. 469.

<sup>195</sup> GSJ, vol. 19, letter no. 237, 259.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

put to use as a means of generating income when its owner was forced to mortgage it in order to alleviate his financial problems.<sup>197</sup> Considering the impressive size of Dubno's booklist, one might assume it was, at least partly, a remnant of his bookselling activity. This would also explain how so many books could have appeared in the booklist, while it is known that Dubno himself lived in poverty. It is also possible that, after becoming too old and ill to work in bookselling, Dubno kept some of the unsold books to lend them to readers in exchange for money.<sup>198</sup> However, Dubno owned only one copy of the vast majority of all other books, which suggests that a large part of the items on the auction catalogue constituted Dubno's private collection. He possessed 89 copies of *Evel yaḥid*, his eulogy for Jacob Emden (RS, octavo 40, no. 1; *bilti mekhorakhim* 57, no. 4), 110 volumes of *La-yesharim tehilah* by Moses Hayim Luzzatto (RS, quarto 25, no. 334; octavo 45, no. 191; *bilti mekhorakhim* 57, no. 1-3), and 255 exemplars of *Sha'are ne'imah* – a treatise on the accents of the Prophetic books of the Bible by Solomon ben Moses Chelm (1717-1781) (RS, quarto 36, no. 746; octavo 52, no. 438, *bilti mekhorakhim* 57, no. 5-8; *kitve yadot*, quarto 60, no. 62), which Dubno edited and published in 1766 in Frankfurt an der Oder and again in 1776 in Frankfurt am Main. It was common for authors and editors to collect all the printed copies of the books they have published and sell them themselves, independently of the publisher.<sup>199</sup> The publication of *Sha'are ne'imah* turned out to be a financial failure, as the public was evidently not

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<sup>197</sup> Louis Lewin, "Zum hundertsten Todestage Wolf Heidenheims. Gestorben am 23. Februar 1832", *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums*, 76 (January/February 1932), 5.

<sup>198</sup> See n. 161.

<sup>199</sup> Shlomo Berger, "Selling Books in Eighteenth-Century Amsterdam: A Yiddish Sale Advertisement from circa 1760", *Zotot: Perspectives on Jewish Culture* 5 (2008), 132.

interested in buying a book about such an arcane topic, and many exemplars were given away as free gifts.<sup>200</sup>

Dubno owned several expensive copies and editions of books, which could have been destined for sale. According to the sale inventory, 13 manuscript volumes were written on vellum (“kelaf”),<sup>201</sup> and one volume was, unusually, printed on vellum (*Seder tefilot ke-minhag Sefarad*, “printed on vellum” (“nidpas al kelaf”), Proops: [Amsterdam], RS, octavo 54, no. 513). Furthermore, one item, *the Talmudic tractate Sukkah* (RS, octavo 42, no. 80, “otiyot adumot, karriel”), was printed in red ink, which was commonly used in publishing liturgical

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<sup>200</sup> GSJ, vol. 19, letter no. 237, 259.

<sup>201</sup> *Behinot ha-olam*, Jedaiah ben Abraham Bedersi, “very old manuscript on beautiful vellum” (“k[etav] y[ad] yashan noshan al kelaf yafeh”), RS, *kitve yadot*, octavo 61, no. 24.

*Ha-mevakesh*, Shem Tov ben Joseph Falaquera, “on beautiful vellum” (“al kelaf yafeh”), RS, *kitve yadot*, quarto 60, no. 57.

*Hi[dushe] ha-RaN* on tractates Megilah and Kidushin, Nissim ben Reuven of Girona, “beautiful manuscript on vellum” (“k[etav] y[ad] yafeh al kelaf”), RS, *kitve yadot*, quarto 58, no. 4.

*Maḥzor birkat kohanim*, “beautiful manuscript on vellum” (“k[etav] y[ad] yafeh al kelaf”), RS, *kitve yadot*, quarto 58, no. 9.

*Maḥzor Pesah Shavuot ve-daled parshiyot* (the four pericopes read out in the synagogue in addition to the weekly pericope, two before and two after Purim), “on beautiful vellum, and with one hand signature, year 286”, “al kelaf yafeh, ve-nimtsa bo ḥatimat yad eḥad shenat 286 [1525/1526]”, RS, *kitve yadot*, folio 58, no. 6.

*Or zarua [Pe[rush] ha-tefilah a[l]p. ha-sod le-rabi David be-rabi Yehudah Hehasid*], David ben Yehudah he-Hasid, “beautiful manuscript on vellum” (“k[etav] y[ad] yafeh al kelaf”), RS, *kitve yadot*, quarto 59, no. 35.

*Pe[rush] al ha-Torah*, Abraham ibn Ezra, “beautiful manuscript on vellum” (“k[etav] y[ad] yafeh al kelaf”), RS, *kitve yadot*, quarto 58, no. 2.

*Pe[rush] al tehilim*, Menahem ben Solomon ha-Levi, RS, *kitve yadot*, quarto 59, no. 30. *Sefer ha-gilgul*, “written in the year 318 [1557/1558]” (“nikhtav shenat 318 [1557/1558]”), RS, *kitve yadot*, quarto 59, no. 32.

*Shesh kenafayim*, Immanuel ben Jacob Bonfils, “with illustrations and a commentary on vellum” (“im tsiyuri[m] u-fe[rush] al kelaf”), RS, *kitve yadot*, quarto 59, no. 32; *kitve yadot*, quarto 59, no. 52.

*Tefilah u-maḥzor, minhag Sefarad*, “on vellum” (“al kelaf”), RS, *kitve yadot*, quarto 58, no. 12.

*Tosafot al-ḥulin*, RS, *kitve yadot*, folio 58, no. 9.

*4 Yeri'ot kelaf*, RS, *kitve yadot*, octavo 61, no. 30.

and legal works,<sup>202</sup> 22 items were described by the cataloguer as “beautiful”,<sup>203</sup> 19 were large paper copies,<sup>204</sup> of which 5, as well as 7 others,<sup>205</sup> were printed on

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<sup>202</sup> Victor Scholderer, Denis E. Rhodes (ed.), *Fifty Essays in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-century Bibliography* (Amsterdam: M. Hertzberger, 1966), 265.

<sup>203</sup> *Arba'ah turim*, Ya'akov ben Asher, “four volumes, beautiful leather binding” (“4 kerakhim yukht yafeh”), [Berlin, 1702], RS, folio 5, no. 164.

*Arba'ah turim im Bayit ḥadash*, 5 vols. Frankfurt am Main [1712-15], RS, folio 5, no. 166.

*Avne segulah*, Isaac Belinfante, “beautiful poems by a few authors, three parts in one volume, very beautiful leather binding” (“shirim yafim mi-kamah meḥabrim 3 ḥalaki[m] be-kherekh eḥad f[rants] b[and] yafeh me'od”), RS, *kitve yadot*, octavo 60, no. 1.

*Behinot ha-olam*, Jedaiah ben Abraham Bedersi, “bound together with several other small works, very old, on beautiful vellum” (“ve-od eizeh s[efarim] ketanim meḥubarim yahad, yashan noshan al kelaf yafeh”), RS, *kitve yadot*, octavo 61, no. 24.

*Gan na'ul*, “four volumes, beautiful” (“4 kerakhim yafeh”) Naphtali Herz Wessely [Amsterdam, 1765], RS, octavo 42, no. 82.

*Ha-mevakesh*, Shem Tov ben Joseph Falaquera, “on beautiful vellum” (“al kelaf yafeh”), RS, *kitve yadot*, quarto 60, no. 57.

*Hen tov*, Tuvia Halevi [Venice, 1605], RS, folio 5, no. 158.

*Ḥidushe ha-Ritba*, “on five tractates, beautiful leather binding” (“al 5 masekhtot yukht yafeh”), Yom Tov ben Avraham Asevilli/Ishbili, Amsterdam [1792-93], folio 4, no. 139.

*Ḥovat ha-levavot with commentary*, Bahya ben Joseph ibn Paquda, Amsterdam [1670], RS, octavo 44, no. 142.

*Ḥumash im perush Rashi ve-Abravanel*, 5 vols. Amsterdam [1768], RS, quarto 21, no. 184.

*Kaftor u-Ferah*, Estori Farhi, “hand-written comments of the deceased (Dubno) in the title page and indexes” (“ha-sha'ar ve-ha-maftehot k[etivat] [y]ad me-ha-mano'ah. Yafeh me'od”), [Venice, 1549] RS, quarto 25, no. 311.

*Maḥzor Pesah Shavuot*, “with the four pericopes, on beautiful velum, and with one hand signature, year 286” (“ve-4 parshiyot, al kelaf yafeh ve-nimtsa bo ḥatimat yad eḥad shenat 286 [1525/1526]”), RS, *kitve yadot*, folio 58, no. 6.

*Mekhilta with the commentary Zeh yenaḥmenu* by Moses ben Simon Frankfurter, “beautiful large paper” (“neyar gadol yafeh”) [Amsterdam, 1712], RS, folio 7, no. 249.

*Moreh nevukhim with four commentaries* (“im 4 perushim”), Moses Maimonides [Sabionetta, 1553], RS, folio 8, no. 257.

*Nevi'im; Ketuvim; Agudat Shmu'el*, “beautiful leather binding” (“f[rants] b[and] yafeh”), RS, octavo 53, no. 481.

*Nora tehilot*, Joel ibn Shu'aib, “two parts in one ‘beautiful’ volume” (“2. ḥ[alakim] be-kherekh eḥad yafeh”) [Salonika, 1569-69], RS, quarto 30, no. 509.

*Ha-Ribash*, Isaac ben Sheshet Perfet's responsa [Constantinople, 1546-47], “a beautiful leather-bound volume” (“kerekh yucht yafeh”), RS, quarto 37, no. 787.

*Seder tefilot ke-minhag Polin*, “very beautifully bound” (“mekhorakh yafeh me'od”), Amsterdam [1804?], RS, quarto 39, no. 869.

*Seder tefilot ke-minhag Sefarad*, “beautiful leather binding” (“f[rants] b[and] yafeh”), Proops: [Amsterdam, 1716], RS, octavo 54, no. 513.

*Sefer tehilim*, Proops: [Amsterdam], RS, octavo 53, no. 455.

*Talmud bavli*, 12 vols., “Half Frankfurt a. M., half Amsterdam, beautiful leather binding” (“ḥatsi Frankfurt am Main va-ḥatsi Amsterdam, yukht yafeh”), RS, folio 16, no. 549.

*Yalkut ha-mekhiri*, Machir ben Abba Mari, “beautiful manuscript, leather binding” (“k[etav] y[ad] yafeh, yukht”), *kitvei yadot*, folio 58, no. 4.

- <sup>204</sup> *Bava metsi'a*, Bezalel ben Abraham Ashkenazi [*Shitah Mekubetset*, probably Amsterdam, 1743], RS, folio 1, no. 33.
- Ashle Ravreve* [*Shulhan Arukh* on Yoreh De'ah with commentaries], Joseph ben Ephraim Karo, Proops: Amsterdam, 1711], RS, folio 2, no. 38 .
- Hok Ya'akov with Solet le-minhah*, Jacob ben Joseph Reischer (Dessau, [1696]), RS, quarto 23, no. 228
- Humash im perush Rashi*, "beautiful leather" ("yukht yafeh"), Berlin, RS, quarto 21, no. 184.
- La-yesharim tehilah*, Moses Hayim Luzzatto, Amsterdam [1743], RS, quarto 25, no. 334.
- Maḥzor*, Proops: [Amsterdam 1768], RS, quarto 27, no. 408.
- [*Perush al*] *nevi'im aḥaronim*, Moshe Alshech [perhaps *Mar'ot ha-tsovoṭ*, Jessnitz, 1720], RS, folio 1, no. 22.
- Mekhilta with the commentary Zeh yenaḥmenu* by Moses ben Simon Frankfurter [Amsterdam, 1711-1712], RS, folio 7, no. 249.
- Mishnayot*, Proops: [Amsterdam, 1775-1776, RS, quarto 30, no.498.
- Panim me'iroṭ*, Meir Eisenstadt, Amsterdam [1715], RS, folio12, no. 505.
- Peri ḥadash*, Hezekiah ben David da Silva, "large paper, leather binding" ("neyar gadol frants band") [Amsterdam, 1730], RS, folio 11, no. 360.
- Sha'are dura* by Isaac ben Meir of Dueren, with the commentary 'Mevo She'arim' by Nathan ben Shimshon Spira [Lublin, 1574], RS, folio 12, no. 415.
- Sha'are orah with commentary*, Joseph ben Abraham Gikatilla [Riva di Trento, 1561], RS, quarto 36, no. 744.
- Tanakh, ed. Daniel Ernest Jablonski [Berlin, 1699], RS, quarto 39, no. 857.
- Torat Moshe*, Moshe Alshech, Proops: [Amsterdam, 1710], RS, folio 1, no. 20.
- Alfasi (probably referring to Isaac ben Jacob Alfasi's *Sefer ha-halakhoṭ*), "three volumes, leather" ("3 kerakhim yukht") [Amsterdam, 1720], RS, folio 1, no. 27.
- Yad ḥazakah*, Moses ben Maimon, with Abraham de Boton commentary *Lehem Mishnah*, 4 vols., Athias: [Amsterdam, 1702-03], RS, folio 5, no. 171.
- Yalkut Re'uveṇi*, Reuben Hoshke ha-Kohen. Athias: [Amsterdam, 1700], RS, folio 6, no. 182.
- Yein Levanon*, Naftali Herz Wessely [Berlin, 1775], RS, folio 6, no. 179.
- <sup>205</sup> *La-yesharim tehilah*, Moses Hayim Luzzatto, RS, quarto 25, no. 334, Amsterdam [1743]; octavo 45, no. 191; *bilti mekhorakhim* 57, no. 3, Berlin [1780].
- Leket ha-kemaḥ*, Moses Hagiz, Amsterdam [1707], RS, *nishmatim*, octavo 56, no. 29.
- Maḥzor*, Kashman: [Amsterdam, 1767], RS, quarto 27, no. 408.
- Orot ha-mitsvot*, Benjamin Raphael Dias Brandon [Amsterdam, 1752/1753], RS, *nishmatim*, octavo 56, no. 1.
- Panim me'iroṭ*, Meir Eisenstadt, Amsterdam [1715], RS, folio12, no. 505.
- Tefilot le-ḥodashim u-le-mo'adim*, Amsterdam [1716], RS, octavo 54, no. 512.
- Sefer yuḥasin*, Abraham Zacuto [Constantinople, 1566], RS, octavo 45, no. 170.
- Shevilei emunah*, Meir ben Isaac Aldabi, Amsterdam [1627], RS, octavo 51, no. 407.
- Sha'are dura*, Isaac ben Meir of Dueren [Cracow, 1534], RS, folio 12, no. 415.
- Sukkah*, RS, octavo 42, no. 80.
- Torat Moshe*, Moshe Alshech, Proops: [Amsterdam, 1710], RS, folio 1, no. 20.
- Yein Levanon*, Naftali Herz Wessely [Berlin, 1775], RS, folio 6, no. 179.

regal paper (cartreal)<sup>206</sup> of various sizes. Based on the places and dates of publication that are sometimes mentioned, and on the occasional comments by the cataloguer, we can cautiously assume that Dubno possessed 4 incunabula<sup>207</sup> (books printed in Europe before 1501, whose publishers attempted to imitate the style of manuscripts: the commentary on the Pentateuch by Levi ben Gershon (“defus yashan noshan”, [Mantua] 1476), RS, folio 10, no. 348), *Yosippon* (very old print, “defus yashan me’od” [Mantua, 1477] RS, quarto 23, no. 261), *Nofet zufim* by Judah ben Jehiel Rofe (*melitsah*, very old print “melitsah, defus yashan me’od” [Mantua, 1475/1476] RS, quarto 30, no. 50), and *Perush Imanu’el* [of Rome] *al Mishle ve-Ralbag al Iyov ve-Hamesh megilot ve-Ezra* ([Naples], 1487, RS, quarto 32, no. 605). Alexander Marx noticed the presence of some very rare volumes, such as *Bakashot*, Constantinople, ca. 1545 (RS, quarto 18, no. 81), Abraham Jakini’s *Hod malkhut* ([Constantinople, 1655] RS, quarto 20, no. 140), a prayer-book printed in Fano in 1503 (RS, octavo 54, no. 517), and *Seliḥot minhag Cologne* (RS, quarto 31, no. 545).<sup>208</sup>

According to the inventory, Dubno himself produced manuscript copies of at least three works: *Avodat ha-mikdash* by Moses ben Michael Dessau (RS, *kitve yadot*, octavo 61, no. 22, *ḥibro Mosheh Dessau* [“composed by Mosheh Dessau]),<sup>209</sup> an eighteenth-century Talmud scholar, *Hekhalot* (RS, *kitve yadot*,

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<sup>206</sup> The term “regal/royal paper” relates to the size of the volume. Royal folio amounts to 20 by 12.5 inches, royal octavo - 6.25 by 10 inches, and royal quarto - 10 by 12.5 inches.

<sup>207</sup> Alexander Marx gives different numbers: Alexander Marx, *Studies in Jewish History and Booklore* (Farnborough, Hants., England, Westmead: Gregg International Publishers Ltd., 1969), 220-221.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid. 220 n. 66a.

<sup>209</sup> A description of sacrifice offerings in the Temple, *Sefer avodat ha-mikdash* is now in possession of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. According to the catalogue entry, the work was penned by Moses Mendelssohn and it was copied by Dubno in 1802 (Cat. no. MS 4062). However, in a private conversation, Andrea Schatz has identified

quarto 60, no. 59), and *Sefer ha-peli'ah* (RS, *kitve yadot*, quarto 60, no. 60). The latter, grouped together with other kabbalistic books, remained unfinished.<sup>210</sup> Another mystical work he copied by hand was *Mishnat Yosef ben Uziel* (also known as *Baraita de-R. Yosef ben Uziel*), a commentary on *Sefer yetsirah*, and this copy can be found in the Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana.<sup>211</sup> These manuscript volumes could have been produced either for self-use or as a gift. Since *Avodat ha-mikdash* seems to have never been published, and the *Hekhalot* literature as well as *Mishnat Yosef ben Uziel* appeared in print for the first time only in the second half of the nineteenth century, Dubno must have copied them from another manuscript.<sup>212</sup> *Sefer ha-peli'ah* was published for the first time in Koretz in 1784,<sup>213</sup> but it is impossible to know if he had access to this printed version. The practice of copying published books was common among *yeshivah* students of the early modern period as a method of study and a means of obtaining books for personal use without spending money on buying them. The practice persisted long after the invention of print.<sup>214</sup>

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the manuscript as a work by Moses ben Michael Dessau. It seems to be the only extant copy of this work.

<sup>210</sup> "... *u-khefi ha-nir'eh lo hishlim otam.*"

<sup>211</sup> "Joseph ben Uzziel" in: *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 7, 273.

Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana, HS. ROS. 426.

<sup>212</sup> Hekhalot literature was first published by:

Adolph Jellinek, *Bet ha-midrash* (Nies, 1853–78);

Solomon Aaron Wertheimer, *Bate midrashot* (Jerusalem: 1893-97);

Solomon Musajoff, *Sefer merkavah shlemah* (Jerusalem: 1921).

See also: Peter Schäfer, Margarete Schlüter, Hans Georg von Mutius, *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1981).

According to Scholem, *Mishnat Yosef ben Uziel* was published by Abraham Epstein in *Ha-ḥoker* (Vienna, 1894), vol. 2, 43. See: Gershom Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 83.

<sup>213</sup> Piergabriele Mancuso, *Sefer ḥakhmoni* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2010), 24, n. 88.

<sup>214</sup> Elchanan Reiner, "A Biography of an Agent of Culture: Eleazar Altschul of Prague and his Literary Activity," Michael Graetz (ed.), *Schöpferische Momente des europäischen Judentums in der frühen Neuzeit* (Heidelberg: Hochschule für Jüdische Studien Heidelberg, Winter c2000), 238.



## ii. Methods of book collecting

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, much book buying and selling took place during book fairs. One of the most famous of these was held twice a year in Frankfurt am Main, and Dubno presumably acquired many of his volumes there. The book fairs also provided an opportunity for exchanges of information and negotiations between authors and publishers.<sup>215</sup> While assembling his own collection, Dubno would certainly have made use of bibliographies such as *Sifte yeshenim* by Shabbetai ben Joseph Bass ([Amsterdam, 1680] RS, quarto 36, no. 753-754, which is described in the booklist as: “with additions and corrections by the deceased author, of blessed memory” (“im tosafot ve-hagahot ha-meḥaber ha-mano’ah z.l.”), *Seder ha-dorot* by Jehiel Heilprin ([Karlsruhe, 1769] RS, folio 9, no. 311), *Lev shalem* of Solomon Salem ([Amsterdam, 1773] RS, folio 7, no. 222), Johann Christian Wolf’s *Bibliotheca Hebræa* ([Hamburg, 1715–33] quarto 18, no. 80) and the booklist of David Oppenheim’s library ([Hamburg, 1786] RS, quarto 35, no. 696). It is interesting to compare the latter collection with Dubno’s booklist. Oppenheim’s aim was to possess every work ever written in Hebrew,<sup>216</sup> an ambition which may have been motivated by his sense that Jewish culture was on the decline in his day and that its literary heritage should be preserved for future generations. Another possibility is that Oppenheim followed in the footsteps of many non-Jewish eighteenth-century intellectuals who considered

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<sup>215</sup> Jean Baumgarten, “The Printing of Yiddish Books in Frankfurt-on-the-Main (17th and 18th Centuries)”, *Bulletin du Centre de recherche française de Jérusalem*, 20 (2009) [online], accessed on 12 April, 2016. Available at: <http://journals.openedition.org/bcrfj/6225>.

<sup>216</sup> Marx, *Studies*, 218.

themselves *bibliomanes*, collectors who gathered rare and expensive books for their aesthetic and financial value rather than for their academic content.<sup>217</sup> In fact, Oppenheim perceived the book first and foremost as a material artefact, and he certainly did not study all of his 7,000 volumes and 1,000 manuscripts, as he spent many years away from his library.<sup>218</sup> By contrast, for Dubno, the acquisition of rare volumes was not only a source of pride and prestige; it also served his scholarly interests, which is evidenced by notes that he left on the margins of his books.<sup>219</sup> Moreover, his collection benefited other scholars who would visit his library and copy Dubno's manuscripts.<sup>220</sup> Both libraries form part and parcel of the eighteenth-century Jewish Republic of Letters, as they were accessible to other scholars, facilitated the exchange of ideas, and invigorated literary culture through social interaction.<sup>221</sup>

It is impossible to determine when Dubno started collecting books. He created a catalogue of his prints in 1771, about three years after his arrival in Amsterdam.<sup>222</sup> It listed the books he possessed by title, author's name and

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<sup>217</sup> Brockliss, *Calvet's Web*, 289.

<sup>218</sup> Teplitsky, *Between Court Jew*, 6-7. Oppenheim owned 4,500 prints and 780 manuscripts according to Roger S. Kohn, "A Treasured Legacy: Hebrew Manuscripts at the Bodleiana", *Library History* 20 (July 2004), 97.

<sup>219</sup> See for example books in the British Library that used to belong to Dubno : Moses ben Shem Tov Ibn Habib, *Nivhar me-osher rav marpe lashon mi-kesev u-mi-zahav darkhe no'am* (Venice: 1546), UIN: BLL01014684276. Hayyim Joseph David Azulai, *Sefer shem ha-gedolim* (Livorno: 1786), UIN: BLL01013716655.

<sup>220</sup> See for example the collection of abstracts from one of Dubno's manuscripts by Süsskind ben Mendel Tal (Amsterdam, 1808) in Ets Hayim Library, cat. no. EH 47 E 27 02.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid. 132. While the Jewish Republic of Letters is often associated with the emergence of journals such as *Ha-Me'asef* and *Ha-Melits* in 1784, Bar-Levav has traced it to an earlier period, giving as an example the Jewish community of early modern Amsterdam. See Bar-Levav, "Amsterdam and the Inception....", 234-235; Goldgar, *Impolite Learning*, 1-2, 4.

<sup>222</sup> *Reshimah mi-sefarim sheli*, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana in Amsterdam, HS. ROS. 469.

lifetime, year of publication, brief description of contents, volume size, and number of pages. An excerpt from this list was published in Gabriel Polak's letter to Samuel David Luzzatto, as a model of exemplary cataloging.<sup>223</sup> Dubno created the booklist probably for purely scholarly reasons. It displays signs of "library awareness", a term proposed by Ariel Bar-Levav to describe the perception of a library as a whole that has an ideological and practical purpose, and whose collection of books on a given subject is regarded as representing a particular branch of knowledge. The concept of library awareness, which emerged in the seventeenth century with the publication of such bibliographies as *Sifte yeshenim* by Shabbetai Bass (Amsterdam: 1680), can be contrasted with medieval Jewish book collections, in which each book was perceived as a separate item.<sup>224</sup>

In the booklist of 1771, Dubno divides his books into a number of categories, such as *hagadot*, poetry, ethics, polemics, commentaries, homilies, grammar and the Masorah, history (*yemot olam*) or stories. The fact that Dubno arranged his books according to genres suggests that he collected books on several subjects and perceived them as a representation of a branch of knowledge. Dubno's comments on the books that were mentioned in his booklist imply that he must have read at least some of them.<sup>225</sup> Scholars who composed a registry of their libraries were probably motivated by the wish to promote their

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<sup>223</sup> Gabriel Polak, *Sefer halikhot kedem* (Proops: Amsterdam, 1846), 32-36.

<sup>224</sup> Bar-Levav, "Amsterdam and the Inception of the Jewish Republic of Letters", 225-226.

<sup>225</sup> See for example his remarks on Shlomo Zalman Hanau, *Binyan Shelomoh* (Frankfurt am Main: 1708) - "excellent composition" (*hibur nifla*); on Louis Cappel, *Sod ha-nikud* (Leiden: 1624) - "beautiful composition" (*hibur yafeh*); on Aaron Moses Hirsch of Lvov, *Ohel Moshe* (Zolkva: 1765) - "a desirable and beautiful composition" (*hibur neḥmad ve-yafeh*), all in: Dubno, *Reshimah mi-sefarim sheli*, 4b.

book collections and, therefore, might have included in the list only those works that could enhance their position in society.<sup>226</sup>

Starting from the seventeenth century, the art of portraiture became popular among Dutch Jews, particularly the Sephardim, even though previously portraits were often associated with idolatry. This process began with decorative depictions of unidentified humans in such books as anthologies of customs (*minhagim*) and Passover *hagadot*. Amsterdam rabbis started to include authorial portraits in the frontispieces of their publications and also sent them to community members who would keep them as amulets.<sup>227</sup> Several years after compiling his library catalogue, Dubno added his own portrait on the first page, which was followed by a listing of his academic achievements: participation in Mendelssohn's Biur project, authorship of *Tikun soferim*, as well as his accomplishments in the fields of grammar and poetry. Dubno is depicted sitting at a desk with a book opened in front of him. Behind him, one can see a bookshelf, partly hidden behind a curtain. This seems to be a standard way of portraying Jewish scholars at that time.<sup>228</sup> While it is not known when exactly the portrait was added to the manuscript, the picture itself was drawn in 1791.<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>226</sup> Cohen, "The Reception of 'Haskalah' Literature", 84.

<sup>227</sup> Michael Zell, *Reframing Rembrandt: Jews and the Christian Image in Seventeenth-century Amsterdam* (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 2002), 26-29; Richard I. Cohen, *Jewish Icons. Art and Society in Modern Europe* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 1998), 114-127.

<sup>228</sup> Compare for example: *Portrait of Akiba Wertheim, Chief Rabbi of Alton*, Leo Baeck Institute Art and Objects Collection, 86.55; *Levi Saul Löwenstamm* [c. 1825], National Museum of Cracow, MNK III-ryc.28191, *Tzvi Hirsch David ha-Levy* [1831], National Museum of Cracow, MNK III-ryc. 25899, Jan Grządzielski, *Akiva Eger* [second quarter of the 19th century], National Museum of Cracow, MNK III-ryc. 25888.

<sup>229</sup> For more information about Dubno's portrait, see the section "Speculations regarding Dubno's withdrawal from the Biur project" in the chapter "Dubno and the publication of the Biur". See also the copy of the portrait in appendix A.

It is not known whether Dubno became a bibliophile while still living in Eastern Europe or whether his exposure to the literary culture of Amsterdam only enhanced his interest in book collection. The Dutch city was famed for its toleration of Jews, and it constituted the most important centre of Jewish printing in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Its prestige was so great that even Hebrew volumes published elsewhere were described as printed in “*otiyot amsterdam*” (Amsterdam letters), and some publications would be given misleading title pages with Amsterdam as the place of publication, while in reality they were printed elsewhere.<sup>230</sup> The availability of books that were published, circulated, and discussed by local scholars may have attracted Dubno to Amsterdam. It enabled him not only to cultivate his literary interests but also to publish some of his own works.

After the French conquest of Holland in 1795, a few young Jewish intellectuals left the old Jewish community and created a new congregation of their own, Adat Yeshurun, whose members embraced the French idea of separation of state from religion and tried to use the newly acquired civic equality to change the political balance within the Amsterdam *kehilah*.<sup>231</sup> Between 1806 and 1814 the Jewish Enlightenment flourished among Dutch Jews. After the Netherlands found themselves under the reign of Louis Napoleon in 1806, the Jewish population was stripped of its autonomy. From then on, one of the main purposes of the Jewish educational system was to facilitate the integration of

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<sup>230</sup> Abraham Meir Habermann, *Ha-sefer ha-ivri be-hitpathuto: mi-simanim le-otiyot u-mi-megilah le-sefer* (Jerusalem: Rubin Mass, 1968), 166; Shlomo Berger, “Yiddish Book Production in Amsterdam between 1650-1800: Local and International Aspects” in: Yosef Kaplan (ed.), *The Dutch Intersection: The Jews and the Netherlands in Modern History* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2008), 203-212.

<sup>231</sup> David Ellenson, *After Emancipation: Jewish Religious Responses to Modernity* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 2004), 99-120.

Jews into the Dutch society, a goal which may have been facilitated by the implementation of Haskalah ideas.<sup>232</sup>

### iii. Maskilic works

While the auction catalogue lists Dubno's books according to their size and in alphabetical order, the analysis of their titles allows for dividing the works into subject categories. Since some titles could be identified as more than one book, the description of Dubno's book collection had to be undertaken with cautiousness. The choice of subjects in this analysis was partly inspired by the auction catalogue of Wolf Heidenheim, which in its content is similar to Dubno's booklist of 1814, and which was arranged according to different genres of Hebrew literature.<sup>233</sup>

Dubno's sale inventory reflects his involvement with the Berlin Haskalah, which is marked by the presence of works by Moses Mendelssohn,<sup>234</sup> Naphtali

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<sup>232</sup> Michman, *The History of Dutch Jewry*, 170-180.

<sup>233</sup> *Reshimat ha-sefarim asher heniah aḥaray Volf Heyidenheim* (Rödelheim: 1833). See pages 118-119.

<sup>234</sup> *Be'ur milot ha-higayon*, Berlin [1765], RS, quarto 18, no. 62.

*Be'ur milot ha-higayon*, Isaac Satanow (ed.) [Berlin, 1795], RS, octavo 47, no. 245.

*Ha-nefesh* [Berlin, 1787], RS, octavo 48, no. 296.

*Kohelet musar* [Berlin, 1750?], RS, quarto 34, no. 658.

*Megilat Kohelet* [Berlin, 1770], RS, octavo 46, no. 213.

*Or la-netivah* [Berlin, 1782], RS, octavo 40, no. 15.

*Phädon* [Berlin: Stettin, 1767], RS, octavo 50, no. 349.

*Sefer be-reshit* in German translation [Berlin, 1780], RS, *nishmatim*, octavo 57, no. 40.

Wessely,<sup>235</sup> Isaac Satanow,<sup>236</sup> as well as by a “letter from Markus Herz”.<sup>237</sup> Since he knew all of these maskilim personally, he might have received some of the books from the authors themselves, as a gift. He also possessed a few issues (from 1783/84 to 1789/90 and from 1808/09 to 1809/10) of *Ha-Me’asef* (RS, octavo 46, no. 203-204; *nishmatim*, octavo 57, no. 31), a maskilic journal established by Isaac Euchel, which was published from 1783 to 1797 and from 1808 to 1811 in Königsberg and Berlin.<sup>238</sup> Hebrew didactic belles-lettres form part and parcel of the collection, as demonstrated by copies of *Mishle shu’alim* by Berechiah ben Natronai ha-Nakdan ([Mantua, 1557-58] RS, octavo 47, no. 277) (a collection of tales), *Shire tiferet* by Wessely ([Berlin, 1782-1802] RS, octavo 51, no. 411-412) (a biblical epos), Isaac Satanow’s *Divre rivot* ([Berlin,

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<sup>235</sup> *Gan na’ul* [Amsterdam, 1765], RS, octavo 42, no. 82.

*Ha-midot* [Berlin, 1788], RS, octavo 46, no. 216.

Letters (“*mikhtav rishon la rav Herz Wessely*”, “*mikhtav sheni la-ha-nizkar le-ma’alah*”), RS, octavo 46, no: 240-241.

*Hokhmat Shelomoh im Ru’ah ḥen* [Berlin, 1780]; RS, folio 6, no. 155.

*Shire tiferet* [Berlin, 1782-1802], RS, octavo 51, no. 411-412.

*Yein Levanon* [Berlin, 1775], RS, folio 6, no. 178-179.

<sup>236</sup> *Be’ur milot ha-higayon*, Moses Mendelssohn, Isaac Satanow (ed.) [Berlin, 1795], RS, octavo 47, no. 245.

*Divre rivot* [Berlin, 1799-1800], RS, octavo 42, no. 86.

*Igeret bet tefilah* [Berlin, 1773], RS, octavo 40, no. 4.

*Igeret eder ha-yakar* [Berlin, 1771/1772], RS, octavo 40, no. 3.

*Imre binah* [Berlin, 1784], RS, quarto 17, no. 47.

*Mishle Asaf* [Berlin, 1788-1791], RS, octavo 47, no. 279.

*Nevu’at ha-yeled im perush*, Isaac Satanow (ed.) [Berlin, 1793], RS, octavo 48, no. 291.

*Seder hagadah al Pesah im targum ashkenazi*, Berlin [1785], RS, octavo 43, no. 108.

*Sefer ha-gedarim*, Menahem ben Abraham Bonafos of Perpignan, Isaac Satanow [Berlin, 1798], RS, quarto 19, no. 110; quarto 20, no. 155.

*Sefer ha-ḥizayon* [Berlin, 1775], RS, *nishmatim*, octavo 56, no. 17.

*Sefer ha-midot le-Aristo* [Berlin, 1790], quarto 27, no. 390; RS, octavo 46, no. 217.

*Sefer ha-shorashim/Sefat emet* [Berlin, 1787], RS, folio 12, no. 421.

*Sefer Iyov im targum Ashkenaz* [Berlin, 1799], RS, octavo 53, no. 494.

*Selihot*, Berlin [1785], RS, folio 9, no. 317.

*Sifte renanot* [Berlin: 1773], RS, quarto 36, no. 756.

<sup>237</sup> “*mikhtav Markus Herz*.” RS, octavo 46, no. 239

<sup>238</sup> Pelli, “Literature of Haskalah”, 347.

1799-1800] RS, octavo 42, no. 86) (a drama-of-ideas based on *Sefer ha-kuzari* of Yehuda ha-Levi), and *Mishle Asaf* ([Berlin, 1788-1791] RS, octavo 47, no. 279) (a collection of maxims inspired by the Book of Proverbs).

Mendelssohn's literary output in Dubno's possession consists of the Pentateuch in German translation, *Megilat Kohelet*, *Kohelet musar*, *Phädon*, *Be'ur milot ha-higayon*, *Or la-netivah*, and the posthumously published *Sefer ha-nefesh*, a Hebrew translation of *Phädon*.<sup>239</sup> A few other influential works are, however, missing: *Jerusalem* (1783), the first edition of *Psalms* (1783), *Morgenstunden* (1785), and *An die Freunde Lessings* (1785), which suggests that Dubno may not have been interested in all the subjects dealt with by Mendelssohn.<sup>240</sup> He also acquired a copy of Isaac Euchel's biography of Mendelssohn, *Toldot Mosheh ben Menaḥem* ([Berlin, 1789] RS, octavo 53, no. 461).

Among other acquaintances whose books were included in the collection was Naphtali Herz Wessely. He possessed copies of *Gan na'ul*, *Sefer ha-midot*, *Ru'ah ḥen al ḥokhmat Shlomo*, *Shire tiferet* and *Yein Levanon*,<sup>241</sup> and he also purchased Wessely's biography, *Zekher tsadik*, by David Friedrichsfeld ([Amsterdam, 1809] RS, octavo 43, no. 131). In 1782, Wessely published his famous *Divre shalom ve-emet*, calling for a reform of Jewish education. The book triggered major criticism on the part of the rabbinical elite,<sup>242</sup> and it does not

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<sup>239</sup> See n. 234.

<sup>240</sup> In the eighteenth century, Mendelssohn's works had more influence on Dutch Gentiles than on Dutch Jews. See for example: Christophe Madelein, *Juigchen in den adel der menschlijke natuur. Het verhevene in de Nederlanden* (1770-1830) (Gent: Academia Press, 2010), 105-124.

<sup>241</sup> See n. 235.

<sup>242</sup> Shmuel Feiner, "Seductive Science and the Emergence of the Secular Jewish Intellectual", *Science in Context* 15.1 (March 2002), 133.



appear in Dubno's inventory. This absence may point to Dubno's disapproval of or temporary severance of relationship with the author, who continued to collaborate with Mendelssohn on the *Biur* after Dubno had abandoned the project. However, Wessely's later publications are present in the booklist, and one cannot be certain whether Dubno rejected the ideas it contained or whether he was indifferent to the notion of reforming the Jewish community, as he also owned Satanow's *Divre rivot* (RS, octavo 42, no. 86), a book propagating similar ideas.<sup>243</sup> However, the presence of this work in Dubno's library does not necessarily mean that it was purchased by Dubno, as some of the books in Dubno's inventory could have been gifts from the authors. Like many other early maskilim, he was not engaged in activities aiming at the total metamorphosis and assimilation of Jewish society into the majority culture.<sup>244</sup>

The inventory equally reflects the intellectual life of Jewish Amsterdam. Dubno possessed an epithalamium (a poem written in honour of a bride and groom), *Gilat ve-ranen*, and a collection of poems in manuscript, *Avne segulah*, by Isaac Belinfante, a renowned writer, poet and bibliophile;<sup>245</sup> works by David Franco Mendes, a Hebrew poet and disciple of Moses Hayyim Luzzatto;<sup>246</sup> *Binyan Ariel* by Saul Lowenstam; as well as responsa issued by the Ets Hayim Academy.<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>243</sup> Pelli, "Literature of Haskalah", 339.

<sup>244</sup> Feiner, "Seductive Science...", 121-135.

<sup>245</sup> Isaac Belinfante, *Gilat ve-ranen* [Amsterdam, 1776-77] RS, *nishmatim*, octavo 56, no. 9; idem, *Avne segulah* (RS, kitve yadot, octavo 60, no. 1)

<sup>246</sup> *Gemul Ataliah* [Amsterdam, 1770], RS, *nishmatim*, octavo 56, no. 10, "With additional poems and corrections by the author" ("im tos[afot] shirim ve-hagaho[t] ha-meḥaber"), and again - octavo 42, no. 81: "with corrections in the author's hand" ("im hagaho[t] k[etivat] y[ad] ha-meḥaber").

*Teshu'at Yisrael bi-yede Yehudit* (Rödelheim [1804]), RS, octavo 55, no. 539.

*Maḥberet bi'at ha-Mashiaḥ*, RS, *kitve yadot*, octavo 60, no. 9.

<sup>247</sup> *Binyan Ariel* ([Amsterdam, 1778] RS, folio 3, no. 75.

*Peri Ets Ḥayim* (Amsterdam [1730-1801]), RS, folio 11, no. 363.

#### iv. Non-Jewish books and works on Christianity

Almost all the books owned by Dubno were written by Jewish authors. While he possessed a small number of works authored by Gentiles, he never refers to them in his writings. This could suggest that they were meant for sale. However, since almost all of them pertained to the subjects of Hebrew grammar and biblical geography, it is probable that he kept most of them for his own benefit. In fact, it was common not to refer directly to Gentile books in one's scholarly work in order not to offend rabbis.<sup>248</sup> Among the works Dubno possessed were the *Bible Concordance* by Johannes Buxtorf ([Basel, 1632] RS, folio 11, no. 377), *Bibliotheca Hebræa* by Johann Christoph Wolf ([Hamburg, 1715–33] RS, quarto 18, no. 80), *Kalendarium Hebraicum/Hokhmat Mazalot* ("with Latin" ("im latayn"))<sup>249</sup> [Basel, 1527], RS, quarto 22, no. 213) and *Logica sapientis rabbi Simeonis* by Sebastian Münster ("with Latin" ("im latayn")) [Basel, 1527], RS, octavo 43, no. 118), a Hebrew translation of *Die Entdeckung von Amerika* by Joachim Heinrich Campe (*Metsiat ha-Erets ha-Hadashah* [Altona, 1807], RS, octavo 47, no. 272), *Biblischer Geographus* by Johann Jacob Schmidt "in High German" ("hoykh-doytsh") (RS, *nishmatim*, octavo 57, no. 34) and one volume, "on the Holy Land" ("min Erets Yisra'el") of *Erdbeschreibung* by Anton Friedrich Büsching (RS, *nishmatim*, octavo 57, no. 35). He also purchased *Ma'arikh ha-ma'arakhot/Dictionarium absolutissimum* by the Jewish convert Philippe d'Aquin, (Paris [1629], RS, folio 8, no. 280) and a Hebrew translation of

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<sup>248</sup> Compare pages 238-239.

<sup>249</sup> *Latayn* - Judeo-German for Latin.

*L'Image du Monde* of Gautier de Metz (*Tsel ha-olam im [igeret] Hai ben Mekits* [Amsterdam, 1732-33, RS, octavo 50, no. 368), all of them presenting Ptolemaic astronomy. He owned only one non-academic work, a Hebrew translation of *Betulia Liberata* by Pietro Metastasio (*Teshu'at Yisrael bi-yede Yehudit*, Rödelheim [1804], RS, octavo 55, no. 539), an oratorium which was translated into Hebrew by David Franco Mendes for the purpose of popularising the apocryphal *Book of Judith* among Jewish readers.<sup>250</sup>

Most of the Christian volumes on the booklist are concerned with the Hebrew language, Hebrew bibliography or the geography of Palestine. The latter were certainly used by Dubno in his own composition on this subject, a work which is no longer extant and must have been lost or remained unfinished.<sup>251</sup> Solomon Chelm, whose book *Sha'are Ne'imah* he published, also made use of Christian sources while writing his *Hug ha-arets* on the geography of Palestine, which, however, remained unpublished until 1988, and it is unknown whether Solomon Dubno was aware of its existence.<sup>252</sup>

Despite years of collaboration with Mendelssohn, Dubno does not seem to have been much drawn to the latter's Christian circle of German intellectuals. In his library there are no books by Lessing, and Christian Wilhelm Dohm's treatise *On the Civil Improvement of the Jews* (Berlin 1781) is also conspicuously absent. It seems that Dubno was not involved in dialogue with contemporary Christian thinkers or in any direct attempts at the improvement of Jewish-

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<sup>250</sup> Melkman, *David Franco Mendes*, 51.

<sup>251</sup> According to Carmoly, it was published under the title *Kuntres Aharon*. However, he admits that he had never seen the book. See: Carmoly, "Solomon Dubno" 312. Also: Leopold Zunz, "Essay on the Geographical Literature of the Jews, from the Remotest Times to the Year 1841" in: Adolf Asher (ed.), *The Itinerary of Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela* (London and Berlin: A. Asher & Company, 1841), vol. 2, 291. For a discussion about this work, see the chapter "Dubno's poetry and belles-lettres".

<sup>252</sup> Rubin, "Hug ha-arets", 136.

Christian relations. It may stem from his reluctance to merge with Gentiles or from the fact that he might not have known German well enough to freely converse in this language. However, since almost a year had passed between his death and the publication of the catalogue, one cannot completely rule out the possibility that Dubno owned other books by non-Jewish followers of the Enlightenment, which had been sold before the auction took place.

Dubno did own a few works polemicising with Christianity, such as *Ezer ha-emunah* by Moses ha-Kohen de Tordesillas (14<sup>th</sup> century) (RS, *kitve yadot*, quarto 59, no. 22), and *Hizuk emunah* by the Karaite scholar Isaac ben Abraham of Troki ([Amsterdam, 1705] RS, octavo 44, no. 156). He also owned a copy of *Toldot Yeshu* (RS, quarto 30, no. 527; “with Latin”, “im latayn”, octavo 53, no. 465 [Aldorf, 1681]), a Jewish parody of the Christian Gospel, and Yom Tov Lipman Muelhausen’s *Sefer nitsahon*, also with a Latin translation ([Aldorf, 1644] RS, quarto 30, no. 527).

While an inter-religious dialogue between Christian and Jewish scholars had existed since the Middle Ages,<sup>253</sup> in his collection Dubno included only the Hebrew anti-Christian publications. This prompts the question whether he ever had any close contacts with Christians or whether these Jewish polemical writings, with all their inaccuracies and distortions, constituted the core of his knowledge about Christianity. Taking into account Dubno’s critical view of Christians, which he expressed in *Alim li-terufah*,<sup>254</sup> and his negative opinion of Jews who abandoned the traditional Jewish lifestyle and became assimilated into

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<sup>253</sup> David Berger, “Mission to the Jews and Jewish-Christian Contacts in the Polemical Literature of the High Middle Ages”, *The American Historical Review* 91. 3 (Jun., 1986), 576-591.

<sup>254</sup> See page 161.

the Gentile society, it is highly unlikely that he would enjoy the company of non-Jews. Furthermore, it is not certain whether his command of German was good enough to allow him to communicate with its native speakers.<sup>255</sup>

Dubno possessed a few volumes of classical non-Jewish literature in Hebrew translation, which proves that his interests were not strictly limited to Jewish thought. He had Hebrew translations from Arabic of Avicenna (*Ha-kanon ha-gadol*, RS, folio 11, no. 387) and Averroes (*Kitsurei Ibn Rushd*, RS, octavo 51, no. 385, as well as a commentary by the latter on Aristotle's *Analytica Priora*, RS, *Ha-Hekesh le-Ibn Rushd, kitve yadot*, quarto 58, no. 16) and Hebrew versions of the ancient Greek philosophers, including Baruch Schick's Hebrew translation of the first six volumes of *Elements* by Euclid, Hebrew translations of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (*Mah she-aḥar ha-teva*, RS, *kitve yadot*, quarto 59, no. 45) and *Ars Rhetorica* (*Melekheth ha-dibur*, RS, *kitve yadot*, quarto 58, no. 14), as well as books on Aristotle by Isaac Satanow (*Sefer ha-midot le-Aristoteles*, RS, octavo 46, no. 217; quarto 27, no. 390) and Jakob ben Inaktur ([*Kol*] *melekheth ha-higayon le-ibn Rushd*, RS, *kitve yadot*, quarto 59, no. 33). Of particular interest is *Igeret ba'ale ḥayim* (RS, octavo 40, no. 12), a translation from Arabic of one 'epistle' excerpted from the *Encyclopedia of the Brethren of Purity*, composed by a group of medieval Muslim thinkers in Iraq, who adopted the philosophical legacies of Neoplatonism, Buddhism and other religions. The text, translated by Kalonymus ben Kalonymus, became a part of the Hebrew medieval literary canon.<sup>256</sup> The epistle is set in an island on which the native animals have been

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<sup>255</sup> See page 33.

<sup>256</sup> Sarra Tilli, "All Animals Are Equal, or Are They? The Ikhwn al-Şaf's Animal Epistle and its Unhappy End", *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 16.2 (2014), 43-44; Revital Refael-Vivante, "Of Lions and Foxes: Power and Rule in Hebrew Medieval Fables," *Revista de Paz y Conflictos* 2 (2009), 32.

enslaved by human settlers and describes a legal dispute between the humans and the anthropomorphised creatures who ask the king of genies to judge their case. At the end of the story, the complainants acknowledge the superiority of the humans and agree that it is their life purpose to serve them.

#### v. Rabbinical literature

Despite the presence of the above-mentioned non-Jewish works, the vast majority of Dubno's collection consisted of volumes dedicated to rabbinical and Talmudic subjects. Even if a large part of these books were meant for sale by Dubno, he still must have included several of them in his private library, as his booklist of 1771, which listed books in his personal collection, is also dominated by rabbinical works. Therefore, it can be assumed that the conspicuous presence of these books reflected his main intellectual interests. It confirms that, in the intellectual and literary developments of the early Jewish Enlightenment, Dubno was more of a traditional anchor, a scholar very attached to established Jewish cannon, and, while he assimilated well into the intellectual climate of Amsterdam and the early Haskalah movement, he had little in common with the radical Prussian maskilim who strove for a more modern library that would challenge the rabbinical authority.<sup>257</sup>

The study of various religious authorities, expressing divergent and even contradictory opinions, was inherent in the rabbinical tradition and was pursued

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<sup>257</sup> Feiner, *Jewish Enlightenment*, 67; idem, "Towards a Historical Definition of the Haskalah" in: David Sorkin, Shmuel Feiner (eds), *New Perspectives on the Haskalah* (London: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2001), 206-208.

by Torah scholars in the process of forming their own views.<sup>258</sup> Thus Dubno's collection included, for example, the controversial volume of responsa *Besamim rosh* by Saul Berlin (RS, folio 13, no. 435), who claimed that the work had been written by the great medieval halakhic authority, Rabbi Asher ben Yehiel. These responsa encouraged the adoption of a new perspective on *halakhah*, and the publication of the volume resulted in Berlin's excommunication.<sup>259</sup> While Dubno's opinion of this book is unknown, the fact that he owned it suggests that he familiarised himself not only with the mainstream of rabbinical literature, but also with recent challenges to its authority. At the same time, his personal piety is evident, as Alexander Marx has noticed, in the fact that he possessed two types of *tefillin*, the more common 'Rashi' type, and the 'Rabenu Tam' variety, (RS, 61, no. 31-32), which suggests that he adhered to the pietistic practice of laying both types.<sup>260</sup>

Dubno owned a rich collection of kabbalistic books. While other contemporary scholars, such as Satanow, or Solomon Maimon, were similarly able to embrace both scientific and mystical thought, some men of letters perceived these two fields of knowledge as mutually exclusive. The tendency to separate science and Kabbalah was present already in the seventeenth century, for example in the writings of Leon Modena who engaged in a critical study of the Zohar.<sup>261</sup> By the nineteenth century, many members of the Wissenschaft des Judentums school had a negative attitude towards Jewish mysticism and believed in a clear rupture between the rational thought of the maskilim and the

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<sup>258</sup> Bar-Levav, "Amsterdam and the Inception", 228.

<sup>259</sup> Pelli, "Literature of Haskalah", 339-340.

<sup>260</sup> Marx, *Studies*, 220.

<sup>261</sup> Dweck, *The Scandal*, 15-16.

kabbalistic obscurantism of the rabbinic elite, often claiming that the former had little or no interest in Jewish mysticism, and that most of them were actually hostile towards it.<sup>262</sup>

Nevertheless, kabbalistic study did flourish during the eighteenth-century, not least in Italy under the influence of Moses Hayyim Luzzatto, of whose literary output Dubno was a great admirer<sup>263</sup> and whose books were popular in Amsterdam, where Luzzatto lived from 1736 to 1743.<sup>264</sup> While Dubno's stance on the controversy regarding Luzzatto's kabbalistic writings and his supernatural visions is unknown, he owned two of his works which concerned the Kabbalah: *Hoker u-mekubal* (Lemberg [1800], RS, octavo 44, no. 155) and *Kela"ḥ [138] pitḥe ḥokhmah* (Zolkiew,<sup>265</sup> RS, octavo 50, no. 358). He also possessed printed copies of both the Lurianic and the Cordoverian Kabbalah (Hayyim Vital, *Sha'ar ha-yihudim* (Koretz [1783]), RS, quarto 36, no. 745; idem, *Ets ḥayim* (Koretz, [1782, 1784, 1785-86 or 1796]), RS, folio 10, no. 341) and Moses Cordovero, *Pardes rimonim* (Cracow-Nowy Dwor, [1591]), RS, folio 10, no. 358; idem, *Tomer devorah* [first published in Venice in 1588], octavo 53, no. 459), two editions of the Zohar -- RS, folio 4, no. 127 (Lublin, 1623-4) and quarto 21, no. 163 (Constantinople, 1736-7, in three volumes), one manuscript copy and five different printed editions of *Sefer yetsirah*: RS, quarto 24, no. 284 "with five commentaries" ("im 5 perushim"), [Grodno, 1806]; *ibid.*, no. 285, "with Latin" ("im latayn") [perhaps: Paris, 1552]; *ibid.*, no. 286 (Koretz [1779]); RS, octavo 45, no.

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<sup>262</sup> Rivka Horwitz, "Kabbalah in the Writings of Mendelssohn and the Berlin Circle of Maskilim", *The Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 45.1 (January 2000), 3-24.

<sup>263</sup> Dubno published a manuscript of Luzzatto's *La-yesharim tehilah* (Berlin, 1780).

<sup>264</sup> Ginzburg, *The Life and Works of Moses Hayyim Luzzatto*, 67-68; "Moses Hayyim Luzzatto", *Jewish Encyclopaedia*, vol. 8, 222.

<sup>265</sup> Probably a mistake. The work was published in Koretz in 1785.



182 (Amsterdam [1642]), and *ibid.*, no. 183 (Constantinople [1791]), as well as one manuscript copy containing several other kabbalistic works, RS, *kitve yadot*, quarto 58, no. 10). In addition, he owned some critical works dealing with Kabbalah, such as *Mitpaḥat sefarim* by Jacob Emden (RS, quarto 27, no. 415 [Altona, 1769]), who alongside his attack on Sabbateanism, presented parts of the Zohar -- a central text for the sectarians -- as inauthentic.<sup>266</sup> Interest in Kabbalah was prevalent among the early maskilim, including Mendelssohn, Wessely, and Solomon Maimon. Isaac Satanow, for example, published the *Ets ḥayim* of Hayim Vital and attempted to reconcile mysticism with philosophy in his own *Imre binah*.<sup>267</sup> Although Mendelssohn expressed some critical views about the Kabbalah, he quoted the Zohar, *Sefer ha-bahir*, *Sefer yetsirah* and Gikatilla's *Ginat egoz* in his writings, treating this mystical literature as an integral part of the Jewish literary heritage. This ambivalent attitude towards the Kabbalah -- criticising and studying it at the same time -- was not uncommon among the maskilim. In some cases, their criticism was, in fact, directed not at the Kabbalah itself, but only at those who dabbled in the 'esoteric wisdom' while not being qualified to engage with it, or who subverted it in their heretical interpretations.<sup>268</sup> Thus, Solomon Chelm denounced the study of Kabbalah by pseudo-scholars who were spiritually unprepared for it, among them the Hasidim, whom he described as being devoid of both kabbalistic and Talmudic learning. The Sabbateans as well as the Hasidim were castigated for their ignorance and abuse of Kabbalah, and both were labeled a sect by their opponents. Solomon Chelm

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<sup>266</sup> Moshe Idel, "Perceptions of Kabbalah in the Second Half of the 18th Century", *Jewish Thought & Philosophy* (1991), vol. 1, 55-56.

<sup>267</sup> Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn*, 353.

<sup>268</sup> Horwitz, "Kabbalah in the Writings...", 4-6.

was not the only one to warn against excessive preoccupation with Kabbalah at the expense of Talmudic study. The traditional rabbinic elite were wary of the superficial understanding of kabbalistic ideas and terms once they became accessible to the masses. Consequently, in 1755 the Council of Four Lands forbade the study of kabbalistic texts by anyone who was under the age of thirty and had not already become proficient in the fields of Talmud and *halakhah*. But the prohibition was intended above all to protect this esoteric body of knowledge rather than to criticize the Kabbalah as such.<sup>269</sup>

Kabbalah-related books made one eleventh of all the titles on Dubno's auction catalogue. The fact that his collection included a large number of items on both *halakhah* and Kabbalah points to the scope of Dubno's religious education and suggests that he considered himself a member of the intellectual elite who was qualified to study the mystical teachings in-depth. The extant fragments of his introduction to *Sefer netivot ha-shalom* contain many references to the Kabbalah, and there is no doubt that Dubno considered it a legitimate and important branch of knowledge that could be used in biblical and linguistic scholarship.<sup>270</sup>

#### vi. Authors with the largest number of books in Dubno's booklist

If we assume that the accumulation of numerous works by a single author may suggest that Dubno held this particular author in high regard, then he must

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<sup>269</sup> Allan Nadler, *The Faith of the Mitnagdim. Rabbinic Responses to Hasidic Rapture* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1997), 29-35, 47-49.

<sup>270</sup> See the section "Dubno's views on grammar" in the chapter "Dubno and the Hebrew language renewal".

have admired both Jacob Emden and Isaac Satanow, as he possessed 23 books by the former and 15 by the latter.<sup>271</sup> Jacob Emden was known for his traditionalism and a passionate campaigner against the Sabbatean and Frankist movements, as well as for his cautious attitude towards the study of secular sciences.<sup>272</sup> As an enemy of philosophy, he cast doubt on the authorship of *the Guide of the Perplexed*, not willing to believe that Maimonides could have embraced Aristotelian thought.<sup>273</sup> By contrast, Isaac Satanow was a prolific maskilic scholar of Eastern-European origin, controversial for attributing his *Mishle Asaf* to an ancient fictitious sage in order to make the book more attractive.

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<sup>271</sup> For the works of Isaac Satanow in Dubno's booklist, see above, n. 236. Dubno possessed the following books by Jacob Emden:

*Aktsat akrav* [Amsterdam, 1752], RS, quarto 32, no. 575.

*Amude shamayim*, 4 vols. "with the late author's own corrections by hand" ("im hagahot me-ha-mehaber ketivat yad ha-mano'ah z.l. Yafeh") [Altona, 1744-1747], RS, octavo 54, no. 500.

*Bet Yehonatan ha-sofer* [Altona: 1763], RS, quarto 19, no. 86.

*Derush tefilat yesharim va-Hali-Khatem* (See Prov. 25:12) [Altona, 1775], RS, quarto 39, no. 864.

*Divre emet u-mishpat shalom* [Altona, 1776], RS, *nishmatim*, quarto 55, no. 4.

*Edut be-Ya'akov* [Altona, 1756], RS, quarto 31, no. 553.

*Ets avot* [Amsterdam, 1751], RS, quarto 32, no. 572; quarto 32, no. 593.

*Igeret bikoret*, RS, folio 12, no. 425, first edition, "defus rishon" [Altona, 1733]; folio 13, no. 430, second edition, "defus sheni" [Altona, 1765].

*Lehem shamayim* [Altona: 1728], RS, folio 7, no. 228.

*Luah eresh* [Altona, 1769], RS, octavo 45, no. 189.

*Mitpahat sefarim* (Königsberg, Altona: 1761-1768), RS, quarto 27, no. 415.

*Mor u-ketsi'ah al tur* [Altona: 1761-1767], RS, folio 8, no. 258.

*Pesah gadol* [Altona, 1775], RS, quarto 33, no. 625.

*Petah einayim* [Altona, 1756], RS, quarto 33, no. 642.

*Sefat emet u-leshon zehorit* [Amsterdam, 1752], RS, quarto 36, no. 757.

*Sefer hitabkut* [Altona: 1761/1762], RS, octavo 56, no. 15.

*Sha'agat aryeh* [Amsterdam, 1755], RS, quarto 35, no. 697.

*She'elat Ya'abets* [Altona, 1739-59], RS, folio 15, no. 516.

*Shevirat luhot ha-aven* [Altona, 1795], RS, quarto 35, no. 704.

*Torat ha-kena'ot* [Amsterdam, 1752], RS, quarto 39, no. 849.

*Va-yakem edut [be-Ya'akov]* (Altona: 1755), RS, octavo 43, no. 121.

*Yatsiv pitgam* [Altona, 1740], RS, quarto 24, no. 283.

*Tsitsim u-ferahim* [Altona, 1768], RS, quarto 34, no. 653.

<sup>272</sup> Mortimer J. Cohen, *Jacob Emden. A Man of Controversy* (Philadelphia: the Dropsie College, 1937), 23, 118-242, 266.

<sup>273</sup> "Book collectors", *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 3, 310-312.

In his writings, he propagated Enlightenment values such as the reform of Jewish education and communal life, religious tolerance, and freedom of speech.<sup>274</sup> Furthermore, Satanow had published a new edition of the *Guide of the Perplexed* with his own commentary, as well as *Pirke shirah* and *Sefer ha-ḥizayon*, both dealing with science. While the two authors might have had different attitudes towards the Haskalah, their writings fit well into Dubno's intellectual interests, since, like Emden, he was a religious, traditional Jew with close links with the rabbinical elite, and, just like Satanow, he embraced the idea of the Hebrew renewal and studied secular sciences himself. Nevertheless, it needs to be taken into account that both Emden and Satanow were highly prolific authors, so the presence of their books in Dubno's library should not be overstated, as it could simply have resulted from there being a great number of works published by them, and should not be necessarily taken to mean they had great influence on Dubno. Dubno also amassed 9 volumes authored by Maimonides<sup>275</sup> and 12 books by the Maharal of Prague, Judah Loew ben Bezalel,<sup>276</sup> renowned for his

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<sup>274</sup> Pelli, "Literature of Haskalah", 337-339.

<sup>275</sup> *She'elot u-teshuvot ve-igrot ha-Rambam*, "old print" ("d[efus] yashan"), RS, *nishmatim*, folio 55, no. 8.

*Igeret teman*, RS, octavo 40, no. 10.

*Ma'amar teḥiyat ha-metim u-mikhtav ha-teḥiyah*, RS, octavo 46, no. 202.

*Milot ha-higayon*, Venice [1550], RS, quarto 28, no. 422.

*Moreh nevukhim*, Sabionetta [1629], "beautiful" ("yafeh"), RS, folio 8, no. 257.

*Pe'er ha-Dor*, RS, quarto 38, no. 810.

*Perush le-pirke Abukrat* ["Limude Apukrat"], RS, octavo 45, no. 192.

*Sefer ha-mitsvot im Megilat Ester*, "with an introduction written by hand of the deceased, of blessed memory" ("im tosafot hakdamah k[etav] y[ad] ha-mano'ah z.l."), RS, quarto 29, no. 471.

*Yad ḥazakah*, Moses ben Maimon, with Abraham de Botton commentary *Lehem Mishnah*, 4 vols., Athias: [Amsterdam, 1702-03], RS, folio 5, no. 171.

<sup>276</sup> *Derekh ḥayim*, RS, folio 4, no. 111.

*Derush al ha-Torah al ha-mitsvot*, RS, quarto 20, no. 134.

*Derush le-shabat ha-gadol*, RS, quarto 20, no. 127.

*Derush le-shabat teshuvah*, RS, quarto 20, no. 136.

*Gevurot ha-shem*, RS, folio 3, no. 84.

*Gur aryeh al ha-Torah*, RS, folio 3, no. 88.

kabbalistic writings, didactic criticism, as well as the study of secular sciences, Hebrew grammar and the Tanakh.<sup>277</sup>

## vii. Philosophy

The 18<sup>th</sup>-century revival of interest in medieval philosophy is viewed by scholars, such as Amos Funkelstein and Shmuel Feiner,<sup>278</sup> as one of the harbingers of the Haskalah, and at the same time a factor that distinguished it from the European Enlightenment movement, which rejected medieval philosophy as backward.<sup>279</sup> The Berlin maskilim often used medieval thought as a means of legitimising their own educational activity and intellectual pursuits. As Maimonides' philosophy was to a great extent affected by Aristotelian thought, it could be used as a precedent to validate the study of non-Jewish and secular subjects. They were drawn to Maimonides' advocacy of philosophy, which was based on reason and yet could be harmonised with religious thought, but they tended to ignore those of his ideas that did not accord with their agenda, for example, his blatant elitism and conviction that common people are condemned to ignorance while wisdom could be granted only to a chosen few. By contrast,

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*Ḥidushe Maharal mi-Prag*, RS, quarto 22, no. 197.

*Or ḥadash al megilat Ester*, RS, folio 1, no. 19.

*Netivot olam*, RS, folio 9, no. 308.

*Netsaḥ Yisra'el*, RS, folio 9, no. 307.

*Derashah* – [perhaps: *Derush al ha-Torah al ha-mitsvot* (Prague: 1593)], RS, quarto 20, no. 130.

*Tiferet Yisra'el*, RS, folio 16, no. 567; quarto 39, no. 861.

<sup>277</sup> Sorkin, *The Berlin Haskalah*, 39, 42-43.

<sup>278</sup> Amos Funkenstein, "Das Verhältnis der jüdischen Aufklärung zur mittelalterlichen jüdischen Philosophie" in: Karlfried Gründer, Nathan Rotenstreich (eds), *Aufklärung und Haskala in jüdischer und nichtjüdischer Sicht* (Heidelberg: Schneider, 1990), 13-21; Feiner, *Jewish Enlightenment*, xi.

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.* 16.

many maskilim aimed at improving the social status and intellectual level of the Jewish population as a whole,<sup>280</sup> a goal, which was evident in such works as Wessely's *Divre shalom ve-emet* or Mendelssohn's *Sefer netivot ha-shalom*. Although Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah* (RS, folio 5, no. 171, 4 vols. (Athias: [Amsterdam, 1702])) was still a standard text of religious learning in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, study of the *Guide of the Perplexed*, republished in 1742, was a novelty, and the *Treatise on Logic* (RS, quarto 18, no. 62, (Berlin [1765]); octavo 47, no. 245, with Mendelssohn's commentary and corrections by Isaac Satanov, Berlin [1795]) was popularised only thanks to Mendelssohn's commentary. At the same time, Dubno owned five books by Isaac Abravanel,<sup>281</sup> who promoted anti-rationalist philosophy, but whose religious tolerance made him very popular among the maskilim.<sup>282</sup> The auction catalogue also lists works dealing with the relation between philosophy and religion, such as *Milhamot ha-Shem* by Gersonides (RS, folio 8, no. 265), *Emunot ve-de'ot* by Saadia Gaon (Amsterdam [1647], RS, quarto 18, no. 50), and *Yesod mora [ve-sod ha-Torah]* by Abraham ibn Ezra (RS, quarto 24, no. 277). In comparison, the booklist of 1771 includes *Milot ha-higayon* of Maimonides and no other of the above-mentioned works, which suggests that either Dubno broadened his interests in his subjects, or the books on philosophy are the remainder of his selling activity.

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<sup>280</sup> Ibid.

<sup>281</sup> *Ateret zekenim* [Sabionetta, 1557], RS, quarto 31, no. 561; octavo 49, no. 312.

*Mashmi'a Yeshu'ah* [Salonika, 1726], RS, quarto 29, no. 493.

*Mifalot Elohim* [Venice, 1592], RS, quarto 29, no. 465.

*She'elot [u-teshuvot] le-Sha'ul ha-Kohen* [Venice, 1574], RS, *nishmatim*, quarto 56, no. 16.

*Rosh emunah*, Venice [1545], RS, quarto 35, no. 686.

<sup>282</sup> James H. Lehmann, "Maimonides, Mendelssohn and the Me'asfim, Philosophy and the Biographical Imagination in the Early Haskalah", *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 20 (1975), 104-105.

### viii. Poetry and belles-lettres

Since he was a poet himself, it is not surprising that Dubno owned several volumes of poetry. The collection included poems inspired by Arabic *maqamat* (rhymed prose), such as *Taḥkemoni* of Judah ben Solomon Harizi, published in Amsterdam in 1728/1729 (RS, octavo 53, no. 466) and *Maḥberet ha-tofet ve-ha-eden* of Immanuel of Rome [probably: Berlin, 1777/1778] (RS, octavo 46, no. 226). The latter can be interpreted as a Jewish response to Dante's *Divine Comedy*, in which the prophet Daniel guides Immanuel through hell and heaven.<sup>283</sup> Similarly influenced by Dante, Moses Zacuto described the sufferings of sinners in the afterlife in another book owned by Dubno, *Tofteh arukh* ([Venice, 1715] RS, quarto 39, no. 872).<sup>284</sup> In addition, Dubno's poetry collection included a rhymed rendering of the halakhah, *Shirat dodi* by Abraham Samuel of Venice [Venice, 1719] (RS, octavo 52, no. 421), *Ayumah ka-nidgalot* by Isaac ben Samuel Onkeneira (RS, *nishmatim*, octavo 56, no. 3), published in Constantinople in 1577, and in Berlin in 1801 -- a poetic argument among the Hebrew letters of the alphabet taking place during the creation of the world, as well as satires, such as *Even bohan*, composed in 1322 by *Kalonymus ben Kalonymus* (RS, quarto 16, no. 1-3), a critique of Jewish society that was republished several times.<sup>285</sup> Dubno also read poems on political and worldly affairs, including the verses dedicated to the Prince of Orange and Napoleon,

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<sup>283</sup> Fabian Alfie, "Immanuel of Rome, Alias Manoello Giudeo: the Poetics of Jewish Identity in Fourteenth-Century Italy", *Italica* 75.3 (Autumn 1998), 309.

<sup>284</sup> Abraham Benedict Rhine, "The Secular Poetry of Italy", *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 1.3 (January 1911), 397-398.

<sup>285</sup> Dubno owned three copies of this work, but the inventory does not specify the editions. Possible editions: are Naples, 1489; Venice, 1546; Cremona, 1558.

*Shir ha-shalom* by Elie Halfon (RS, octavo 51, no. 416), as well as *Behinot olam* by Jedaiah ben Abraham Bedersi (Mantua, [1556] RS, octavo 56, no. 5).

Besides volumes of poetry, Dubno also possessed copies of allegorical dramas. These included *Pardes shoshanim* (better known as *Asire ha-tikvah*) by the 17th-century Sephardi author from Amsterdam, Joseph Penso de la Vega (RS, octavo 50, no. 353), and *Kol milin* by the 18th-century Livornese rabbi and cantor, Abraham Isaac Castelloan (RS, octavo 50, no. 375), as well as a print and a manuscript copy of *Gemul Atalia* by the Amsterdam maskil, David Franco Mendes, written under the influence of Jean Racine and Pietro Metastasio.<sup>286</sup> The latter composition marked the beginning of the historical drama as a new genre in Hebrew literature.<sup>287</sup> Dubno himself published Luzzatto's *La-yesharim tehilah* after he had found it in manuscript form in Amsterdam.<sup>288</sup> In addition, he owned several collections of fables, including an illustrated edition of *Meshal ha-kadmoni* by Isaac ben Solomon ibn Sahula (RS, quarto 29, no. 496), *Ben ha-melekh ve-ha-nazir* by Abraham ben Samuel ha-Levi Ibn Hasdai (RS, octavo 42, no. 65), which relates *inter alia* the life of Buddha, and the popular medieval demonological romance *Ma'aseh yerushalmi* ([Amsterdam, 1753] RS, octavo 47, no. 244).

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<sup>286</sup> Israel Zinberg, *A History of Jewish Literature. The Berlin Haskalah* (Jersey City, New Jersey: KTAV Publishing House, 1976), 206.

<sup>287</sup> Melkman, *David Franco Mendes*, 57-58.

<sup>288</sup> For more information on Luzzatto's *La-yesharim tehilah*, see the chapter "Dubno's poetry and belles-lettres."



## ix. History and contemporary Jewish conflicts

In the Haskalah period history was becoming an academic discipline practiced by both the maskilim and their opponents, as well as a means of forging a new Jewish identity in Eastern Europe, replacing the collective memory which had shaped the self-consciousness of the Jewish population until then.<sup>289</sup> Although Dubno himself did not compose any books on history, he owned several volumes of this type, and in his commentary on the book of Exodus, he referred, for example, to *Sefer ha-yashar*, Venice [1625] (RS, quarto 24, no. 294) -- an anonymous, late *midrash* on biblical history, *Sefer Yosippon*, of which he owned "a very old print" (*defus yashan me'od*, RS, quarto 23, no. 26), -- a 10<sup>th</sup>-century adaptation, first published in Mantua in 1476, of the apocryphal books of Maccabees and Josephus' histories of the first century AD, *Sefer yuhasin* by Abraham Zacuto (1452-1515) ([Constantinople, 1566], RS, octavo 45, no. 170) on the history of Jews from the creation of the world to the 15<sup>th</sup>-century,<sup>290</sup> the midrashic chronologies *Seder olam rabba* and *Seder olam zuta*, published together with the 12<sup>th</sup>-century *Sefer ha-Kabalah* by Abraham ibn Daud (RS, quarto 31, no. 547, Venice [1545-46]), as well as *Shevet Yehudah* by Solomon ibn Verga (RS, octavo 51, no. 404) -- a 16<sup>th</sup>-century history of all the religious persecutions suffered by the Jews from antiquity until the author's own lifetime; Nathan Hannover's *Yeven metsulah* (RS, quarto 23, no. 259) -- an eyewitness account of the violent hostilities directed at the Jews during the 1648 Chmielnicki Uprising in Poland; Yosef ha-Kohen's 16<sup>th</sup>-century *Divre ha-yamim le-malkhe*

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<sup>289</sup> Bartal, *The Jews of Eastern Europe*, 7.

<sup>290</sup> See the section "Dubno's role in the publication of the Biur" in the chapter "Dubno and the publication of the Biur".

*Tsarefat [u-le-malkhe bet Ottoman ha-togar]* (RS, octavo 42, no. 85, Venice [1554]) -- a work which was exceptionally focused on European and Ottoman history rather than dealing exclusively with the fate of the Jews in these domains, covering important world events such as the rise of Luther and the discovery of the New World; and *Horvot Yerushalayim*, first published in Venice in 1627 (RS, quarto 23, no. 233), which deals with the fate of Jerusalem's Jewry under Muhammad ibn Farukh in 1626-27. Dubno also acquired a few works speculating on the whereabouts and destiny of the Ten Tribes, such as *Mikveh Yisra'el* by Menasseh ben Israel (RS, quarto 38, no. 805; octavo 47, no. 275), or *Sefer Eldad ha-Dani* (RS, octavo 41, no. 43, first published in Mantua in 1478) -- the account of a Hebrew-speaking Jew who appeared in Tunisia in the 9<sup>th</sup> century and claimed to be a member of the Ten Lost Tribes.<sup>291</sup> The collection contained, in addition, *Igeret orhot olam* by the Italian scholar, Abraham ben Mordecai Farissol (1451-1526) (RS, octavo 40, no. 13) -- the first Hebrew geographic work to mention the New World, and the 12<sup>th</sup>-century reports by Benjamin of Tudela (*Mas'ot Binyamin*, RS, octavo 47, no. 275) and Petahiah ben Ya'akov of Regensburg (*Sibuv R. Petahiah* [together with *midrash Yonah*], RS, quarto 31, no. 537) about their respective journeys across Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.

Dubno also kept informed about recent conflicts within the Jewish community, such as those entailing accusations of Sabbateanism. He owned *Shever poshe'im* ([London, 1714] RS, octavo 51, no. 408), Moses Hagiz's attack on Nehemia Hayyun, who had been preaching his Sabbatean beliefs in Amsterdam and was excommunicated by Hagiz and the Hakham Zevi, Jacob

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<sup>291</sup> Micha Perry, "The Imaginary War between Prester John and Eldad the Danite and its Real Implications", *Viator* 41.1 (2010) 1-23.

Emen's father, in 1713.<sup>292</sup> Other volumes relating to the Sabbatean controversy were the Emden-Eybeschütz polemics, including Jacob Emden's *Bet Yehonatan ha-sofer*, *Akitsat akrav* and *Petaḥ einayim*,<sup>293</sup> as well as Jonathan Eybeschütz's *Luḥot edut* ([Altona, 1759] RS, quarto 25, no. 324).<sup>294</sup>

Dubno must have developed an interest in history in his youth, as many of the works listed in the auction catalogue appear in his booklist of 1771, including *Sefer yuḥasin*, *Sefer Yosippon*, *Seder olam rabba*, *Seder olam zuta*, *Shevet Yehudah*, *Sefer ha-Kabbalah*, *Sefer Eldad ha-Dani*, *Sibuv R. Petahiah* and *Divre ha-yamim le-malkhe Tsarefat* [*u-le-malkhe bet Ottoman ha-togar*]. The presence of these books in both documents suggests that, probably, they were not for sale, but for Dubno's personal use.

#### x. Grammar

The Haskalah period witnessed the proliferation of literature on grammar. Dubno's passion for this field of study is reflected in his book collection, which included such medieval works as the *Mikhlol* by David Kimhi (Venice [1545], RS, folio 8, no. 262; octavo 46, no. 238), and *Moznayim* by Abraham ibn Ezra (RS,

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<sup>292</sup> Adam S. Ferziger, "Between 'Ashkenazi' and Sepharad: An Early Modern German Rabbinic Response to Religious Pluralism in the Spanish-Portuguese Community", *Studia Rosenthaliana* 35.1 (2001), 7-8; Matt Goldfish, "Halakhah, Kabbalah, and Heresy: A Controversy in Early Eighteenth-Century Amsterdam", *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 84.2/3 (October 1993-January 1994), 172.

<sup>293</sup> See n. 271.

<sup>294</sup> For more about the Emden-Eybeschütz controversy, see, e.g. Cohen, *Jacob Emden*, 97, 128-9, 141-145, 192, 221; Alexandr Putik, "The Prague Sojourn of Rabbi Jacob Emden as Depicted in his Autobiography Megillat Sefer," *Judaica Bohemiae* 42.1 (2006), 53-124; Sid Z. Leiman, Simon Schwarzuchs, "New Evidence on the Emden-Eibeschuetz Controversy: The Amulets from Metz," *Revue des Etude Juives* 165.1-2 (January-June 2006), 229-249.

octavo 45, no. 200, Altona [1770]; no. 201, Venice [1546]; octavo 46, no. 208, “with Wolf Heidenheim’s commentary”, “im perush Heidenheim” [Offenbach, 1791]), as well as more recent works such as *Safah berurah* by Menasseh ben Israel (RS, quarto 36, no. 758; octavo 52, no. 447), *Sefer ha-shorashim* by Isaac Satanow (*Sefer ha-shorashim/Sefat emet* [Berlin, 1787], RS, folio 12, no. 421), and several works on grammar and the Masorah by Solomon Hanau.<sup>295</sup> It can be noted that grammars composed by maskilim involved with the Berlin circle are missing from the list, for example: Avigdor Halevi’s *Davar tov* (Prague: 1783), *Amude lashon* by Joel Brill Loewe (Berlin: 1794), *Talmud lashon ivri* by Judah Loeb ben Ze’ev (Breslau: 1796), *Shoresh Yehudah* by Judah Neumark (Berlin: 1792), *Avtalyon* by Aaron Wolfsohn-Halle (Berlin: 1790). Dubno probably decided not to purchase any of the Prussian grammars due to a difference in approach toward teaching Hebrew grammar. While Prussian maskilim, being influenced by the German linguistics, focused on explaining grammatical rules, Dubno concentrated on the description of linguistic phenomena such as Masoretic punctuation and, therefore, the innovative Prussian grammar textbooks might not have been of interest to him. Furthermore, these works (except for *Avtalyon*) were partly written in German and, after leaving Berlin, Dubno seems to have adopted a negative stance towards studying Hebrew texts with the help of clarifications penned in modern languages. This could also explain why *Hebräische*

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<sup>295</sup> *Beit tefilah ve-sha'are tefilah*, Jessnitz [1725], RS, octavo 54, no. 501.  
*Binyan Shlomo* [Frankfurt am Main, 1724], RS, quarto 19, no. 89.  
*Kuntres kure akavish ve-korot arazim* [Fuerth, 1744], RS, octavo 50, no. 381.  
*Lu'ah ha-binyanim*, Amsterdam [1740], RS, *bilti mekhorakhim* 57, no. 9.  
*Sefer al ha-neginot* (manuscript), RS, *kitve yadot*, octavo 60, no.16.  
*Sefer al ha-tehilim* (manuscript), RS, *kitve yadot*, octavo 60, no.15.  
*Sha'are zimrah* [Jessnitz, 1725], RS, octavo 52, no. 439; *kitve yadot*, quarto 59, no. 41.  
*Tsohar ha-tevah* [Berlin, 1733], RS, octavo 50, no. 366-367.  
*Yesod ha-nikud* [Amsterdam, 1730], RS, quarto 24, no. 276; quarto 24, no. 279.

*Sprachlehre* by German theologian Lebrecht Jehne (Flensburg: 1790) is also missing from the list. The above-mentioned maskilic textbooks were influenced by books on German grammar by non-Jewish scholars such as Johann Christoph Gottsched (1700-1766) and Johann Christoph Adelung (1732-1806). Their books were popular among Berlin maskilim,<sup>296</sup> but do not appear in Dubno's booklist, which might suggest that Dubno neither studied nor taught German grammar.

Some of the books Dubno collected were clearly intended as educational tools for tutoring children, e.g. *Em ha-yeled* by Joseph ben Elhanan Heilbronn (RS, octavo 41, no. 48), published in Prague in 1597 and again in 1642 -- a basic Hebrew grammar with explanations in Judeo-German, or *Mishle agur* by Salomon Jacob Cohen, published in Berlin in 1799 (RS, octavo 48, no. 284) -- rhymed tales in Hebrew with German translation. Ownership of dictionaries and concordances was another sign of the epoch. In Dubno's booklist one can find, *inter alia*, *Imre binah* by the 16<sup>th</sup>-early 17<sup>th</sup>-century kabbalist Issachar Baer of Kremnitz (RS, quarto 18, no. 48, [probably: Prague 1610/11] -- a dictionary of the foreign and difficult words in the Zohar; *Musaf he-arukh* -- an expanded 17<sup>th</sup>-century edition of Nathan ben Jehiel of Rome's 11<sup>th</sup>-century Talmudic dictionary (RS, folio 8, no. 259); *Sefer ha-gedarim* by Menahem ben Abraham Bonafos of Perpignan (RS, quarto 19, no. 110; quarto 20, no. 155) -- a 14<sup>th</sup>-century dictionary of Hebrew scientific and philosophical terms, which was republished by Isaac Satanow (Berlin, 1798) with his own commentary, as well as various other lexicons.

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<sup>296</sup> Irene Zwiep, "Imagined Speech Communities: Western Ashkenazi Multilingualism as Reflected in Eighteenth-Century Grammars of Hebrew," *Studia Rosenthaliana* 36 (2002), 98-117. See also pages 219-220.

## xi. Science

Many of Dubno's volumes dealing with science were written in the Middle Ages (e.g. Isaac Israeli's *Yesod olam*, Abraham ibn Ezra's *Hokhmat ha-mispar*, Abraham ben Hiyya ha-Nasi's *Tsurat ha-arets*),<sup>297</sup> and all of them were out-of-date by Dubno's lifetime. Ignorance of the major scientific discoveries of the early modern era was common among Eastern-European Jews in the eighteenth century,<sup>298</sup> but Dubno also possessed some more recent books on science, such as the volumes authored by Raphael Levi Hannover,<sup>299</sup> *Reshit limudim* by Barukh Lindau (RS, octavo 51, no. 393, Berlin [1788]) and scientific works written by Joseph Solomon Delmedigo (1591-1655),<sup>300</sup> who had studied astronomy with Galileo, and described the Copernican Revolution as more accurate than the traditional worldview presented in Jewish texts and in Aristotle's writings.<sup>301</sup> Dubno must therefore have been aware of some scientific discoveries that remained unknown to most of his coreligionists in Eastern Europe. The acceptance of Gentile theories that contradicted the Jewish tradition could be justified by reference to a passage from the Babylonian Talmud, "their [Gentiles'] view is preferable to ours" (Pesahim 94b).<sup>302</sup> However, the technical complexity

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<sup>297</sup> *Yesod olam*, Isaac Israeli [Berlin, 1777], RS, quarto 24, no. 275.

*Hokhmat ha-mispar*, Abraham ibn Ezra (manuscript), RS, *kitve yadot*, quarto 58, no. 18

*Tsurat ha-arets*, Abraham ben Hiyya ha-Nasi [Basel, 1546], RS, quarto 34, no. 646; quarto 58, no. 6.

<sup>298</sup> Fishman, *Russia's First Modern Jews*, 22-45.

<sup>299</sup> *Luhot ha-ibur* [Leiden-Hannover, 1756-57], RS, quarto 25, no. 321;

*Tekhumat ha-shamayim* [Amsterdam, 1756], RS, quarto 39, no. 853.

<sup>300</sup> *Sefer elim* ("with the author's portrait" ["im tsurato"], (Amsterdam, 1629), RS, quarto 18, no. 53; *Rosh mashbir* (manuscript), RS, *kitve yadot*, quarto 59, no. 26.

<sup>301</sup> Jeremy Brown, *New Heavens and a New Earth: The Jewish Reception of Copernican Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 71-74.

<sup>302</sup> *Nir'in divrehem mi-devarenu*.

of scientific volumes raises the question how much of the knowledge they contained Dubno might have been able to comprehend without a tutor's assistance.<sup>303</sup>

During the period of the early Haskalah, the writings of Copernicus and Galileo were still on the papal Index of forbidden books. Nevertheless, the Enlightenment's encouragement of scientific enquiry paved the way for a wider acceptance of the heliocentric system, but since the new model denied the biblical text as well as the centrality of humanity in the universe, it was rejected by many Jewish scholars such as David Gans in his *Neḥmad ve-na'im* (RS, quarto 30, no. 517 [Jessnitz, 1743]) -- the first Hebrew work to mention Copernicus by name,<sup>304</sup> Tobias Cohen in *Ma'aseh Tuviah* (RS, quarto 28, no. 454, Venice [1707]), and David Nieto in *Mateh dan ve-kuzari sheni* (RS, octavo 47, no. 242 [London, 1714]). Pinhas Hurwitz in his *Sefer ha-berit* (Brno [1797], RS, quarto 19, no.103), did not dismiss the Copernican idea, but preferred the theory of Tycho Brahe, who had merged the old and the new models into one wherein all the planets except for the Earth revolve around the Sun, while the Sun revolves around the Earth.<sup>305</sup> However, the Copernican model was supported in another recent book owned by Dubno, *Tekhumat ha-shamayim* by

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<sup>303</sup> Gad Freudenthal, "Hebrew Medieval Science in Zamość ca. 1730: The Early Years of Rabbi Israel ben Moses Halevy of Zamość," in: Resianne Fontaine, Andrea Schatz, and Irene Zwiép (eds), *Sepharad in Ashkenaz: Medieval Knowledge and Eighteenth-Century Enlightened Jewish Discourse* (Amsterdam: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, 2007), 39-40.

<sup>304</sup> Brown, *New Heavens*, 42-65. Copernicus was alluded to for the first time in a Hebrew publication by Judah Loew Bezalel in *Netivot olam* in 1595.

<sup>305</sup> Idem, "Rabbi Reuven Landau and the Jewish Reaction to Copernican Thought in Nineteenth Century Europe," *The Torah U-Madda Journal* 15 (2008), 123; David B. Ruderman, *A Best-selling Hebrew Book of the Modern Era: the Book of the Covenant of Pinḥas Hurwitz and its Remarkable Legacy* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014), 28, 93.

Raphael Levi of Hannover (RS, quarto 39, no. 853),<sup>306</sup> and the fact that he also possessed a copy of *Ma'amar ha-Torah ve-ha-ḥokhmah* by Mordekhai Gumpel ha-Levi Schnaber-Levison (RS, quarto 26, no. 366 [London, 1771]), would suggest that he was aware of the scientific achievements of Newton and Linnaeus.

Dubno's library encompassed such disciplines as arithmetics (a manuscript copy of *Rosh Mashbir* by Joseph Delmedigo, RS, *kitve yadot*, quarto 59, no. 26), mnemonics (*Lev ha-aryeh* by Leone de Modena, RS, quarto 25, no. 319 [Venice, 1612]), as well as chiromancy and physiognomy (*Toledot adam al ḥokhmat ha-yad ve-ha-partsuf* by Elijah Gallena, RS, quarto 39, no. 835, first published in Constantinople, 1515). He also collected works on medical subjects, e.g. *Ma'aseh Tuviah* by Tobias Cohen (RS, quarto 28, no. 454 [Venice, 1707], and *Limude Apukrat*, RS, octavo 45, no. 192 -- a Hebrew version of an Arabic medical work by Maimonides, also known as '*Pirke Abukrat*', and based on an Arabic translation of the aphorisms of Hippocrates. The co-existence in his library of scientific books by medieval authorities alongside Hebrew summaries of the most recent scientific discoveries of his day may be interpreted as his attempt to draw on the broadest possible range of sources of knowledge on the subject.

According to David Ruderman, the maskilic interest in science should not be perceived as a break from the traditional world but rather as the product of a long tradition of Jewish exposure to an interest in the sciences. He points to the fact that in the early modern period there was no boundary between the religious and the scientific, and that scholars did not necessarily doubt the religious validity

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<sup>306</sup> Ibid. 133.



of studying, for example, astrology and astronomy.<sup>307</sup> Scientific learning, such as had been cultivated in Italy by Abraham Farissol (1451-1525) and Abraham Yagel (1553-1623), persisted in later generations. Immanuel Etkes has pointed out that the Jewish Enlightenment, particularly in Eastern Europe, could hardly have come into existence without the intellectual legacy of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Those Jews who traditionally engaged in rationalistic philosophy and science were more prone than others to adopt the values of the Enlightenment, and when they joined the ranks of the maskilim, they tended to anchor their beliefs in the achievements of their medieval Jewish predecessors.<sup>308</sup> Nevertheless, access to modern scientific literature was often limited owing to the language barrier and the disapproval of scientific enquiry by some rabbinic authorities.<sup>309</sup> Solomon Maimon, for example, reported in his autobiography,<sup>310</sup> that in order to acquire secular knowledge while still living in Eastern Europe, he had to visit the private library of the rabbi of Slonim, Shimshon Ben Mordechai, who would later provide an approbation for Barukh Schick's translation of Euclid.<sup>311</sup> It was, indeed, during this period that maskilic translations

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<sup>307</sup> David B. Ruderman, *Kabbalah, Magic, and Science: The Cultural Universe of a Sixteenth-century Jewish Physician* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1988), 2, 88.

<sup>308</sup> Etkes, "Le-she'elat mevasre ha-haskalah", 112-113.

<sup>309</sup> For example, Yehezkel Landau and David Tevele of Lissa criticised the proposal to include the study of science and other secular subjects in the Jewish school curriculum of the Habsburg Empire. Feiner, *The Jewish Enlightenment*, 91; Jacob Katz, "Introduction" in: Jacob Katz (ed.), *Toward Modernity: the European Jewish Model* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 1986), 110.

<sup>310</sup> Salomon Maimon, *An Autobiography* (New York: Schocken, 1985), edited by Moses Hadas, 41-42.

<sup>311</sup> Feiner, "Seductive Science..." 129.

from modern European languages were just beginning to make scientific works in Hebrew more available to the Jewish public.<sup>312</sup>

The thirst for scientific knowledge was by no means limited to the followers of Haskalah. Dubno's interests in extra-rabbinic bodies of knowledge were most probably awakened prior to his encounter with the Berlin Haskalah. Solomon Chelm, whom Dubno knew personally and whose *Sha'are Ne'imah* he published, condemned ignorance of general knowledge and acknowledged his own delight in the study of logic, grammar, geometry, algebra, the natural sciences and *the Guide of the Perplexed*.<sup>313</sup> Moses Isserles (1520-1572) did not consider rationalist philosophy to be incompatible with Jewish law, and allowed the study of Aristotle in his Cracow *yeshivah* at those times at which Torah study was halakhically forbidden,<sup>314</sup> while the Gaon of Vilna, who held that a close connection existed between Torah and science, and that the latter was indispensable for the study of the former, encouraged the translation of scientific texts into Hebrew.<sup>315</sup> In fact, some fields of science were perfectly acceptable as a means to achieving a better understanding of the sacred texts. Astronomy, for example, was necessary for establishing the yearly calendar and festival days and was therefore essential for maintaining Jewish communal life. It was considered a legitimate field of knowledge already in the Middle Ages, when several scientific treatises on the subject were translated from Arabic into

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<sup>312</sup> Tal Kogman, "Haskalah Scientific Knowledge in Hebrew Garment. A General Statement and Two Examples", *Target* 19.1 (2007), 71.

<sup>313</sup> Solomon Chelm, *Mirkevet mishneh* (Frankfurt an der Oder, 1781), 8.

<sup>314</sup> Abraham Melamed, "A Legitimizing Myth: Ashkenazic Thinkers on the Purported Jewish Origins of Philosophy and Science", *Jahrbuch des Simon-Dubnow-Instituts* 8 (2009), 303.

<sup>315</sup> Fishman, *Russia's First Modern Jews*, 22; Stern, *The Genius*, 214-215, n. 39.

Hebrew.<sup>316</sup> King Solomon himself was presented as the wisest of all men, who had mastered all fields of knowledge, including the sciences. Moreover, according to some, the Greeks had learned philosophy and natural science from the Jews, and Aristotle himself was Jewish.<sup>317</sup> In fact, some scholars even claimed that the 'Israelites' scientific knowledge was misappropriated by other nations who would one day be compelled to give it back to the Jews. New scientific achievements, such as the Copernican theory, were interpreted as a rediscovery of ancient wisdom that originated within the nation of Israel.<sup>318</sup> In a similar vein, Baruch Schick asserted that his Hebrew translation of Euclid's *Elements* contributed to the restoration of mathematics to its ancient Jewish originators, while Solomon Shalem, one of the rabbis who provided a *haskamah* for Schick's translation, claimed that the work would enable the Jews to interpret the Torah correctly.<sup>319</sup>

While the importance of pursuing secular knowledge was actively propagated by many maskilim, most notably Naftali Wessely, also the more traditional Jews, both Eastern- and Western-European, were interested in non-religious study. Jacob Emden, for example, was passionate about science but would devote himself to it only when religious study was precluded by the halakhah.<sup>320</sup> Nevertheless, scientific theories were still often considered

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<sup>316</sup> Kogman, "Haskalah Scientific Knowledge in Hebrew Garment".

<sup>317</sup> Abraham M. Fuss, "The Study of Science and Philosophy Justified by Jewish Tradition", *The Torah U-Madda Journal* 5 (1994), 101-114.

<sup>318</sup> Melamed, "A Legitimizing Myth", 307.

<sup>319</sup> Barukh Schick, *Uklidos* (the Hague: 1780), 1b.

<sup>320</sup> Jacob Emden, *Megilat sefer* (Jerusalem: Sifriat Moreshet Yerushalayim, 1979), 97-98.

For the research on Emden's interest in science and its use in his polemics see: Maoz Kahana, "An Esoteric Path to Modernity: Rabbi Jacob Emden's Alchemical Quest", *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 12.2 (2013), 253-275.

unreliable, as the old ones were constantly being replaced with the new, and all of them were bound, sooner or later, to be proven to be equally distant from the truth. By contrast, the theological understanding of the world, divinely inspired, was constant and immune to doubt.<sup>321</sup> The reluctance to reject one's confessional beliefs had led some scholars, such as Abraham Yagel in his day, to reject the more controversial scientific theories and accept only those that could be interpreted in a way that was compatible with the sacred texts.<sup>322</sup> Fear of transgressing theological boundaries and censure by fellow-Jews prompted some aspiring scientists to compare their hunger for secular knowledge to the desire for a forbidden woman.<sup>323</sup> This tension was by no means unique to Jewish society. Christian scholars of the early modern age faced similar dilemmas regarding the acceptability of scientific discoveries that did not conform to their religious traditions.<sup>324</sup>

According to Etkes, Solomon Chelm's interest in the sciences and rationalistic philosophy stemmed entirely from his Jewish intellectual heritage and was influenced in particular by such towering figures from the Jewish past as the Maharal of Prague and Maimonides. His interest in philosophy and science either developed independently of the European Enlightenment, or was shaped by it only indirectly.<sup>325</sup> While Dubno might have gone one step further, as he owned a number of works by Aristotle in Hebrew translation, as well as a few works in modern European languages, he never quoted them in his writings, and one

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<sup>321</sup> Brown, *New Heaven*, 49.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid. 64-65.

<sup>323</sup> Feiner, "Seductive Science...", 121-135.

<sup>324</sup> For a summary of the academic discourse on this topic, see Ruderman, *Kabbalah*, 1.

<sup>325</sup> Etkes, "Le-she'elat mevasre ha-haskalah", 100-101

cannot be certain whether he was influenced by them or even had read them at all. According to his booklist of 1771, he owned very few works that included elements of science and that reappear in the catalogue of 1814, for example *Shilte ha-giborim* by Abraham Portaleone (RS, folio 12, no. 413, “*le-rav Avraham ha-rofe*” [Mantua: 1612]). Since the number of books related to science is very modest in comparison to other categories in Dubno’s collection of 1771, it can be assumed that he might have become more interested in this branch of knowledge later on in his life, or that these books made part of works destined for sale. Many of the works that appear in the auction catalogue of 1814 appear also in libraries of other Jews who had no background in science and did not write scientific treatises. For example, Abraham Keyser, whose collection is discussed below, owned *Yesod olam*.<sup>326</sup> Wolf Heidenheim, who, just as Dubno, was a religious Jew with an interest in the Masorah, had a number of scientific works, including *ha-Kanon ha-gadol* by Avicenna, *Yesod Olam* by Isaac Israeli, *Kelil ha-ḥeshbon* by David Friesenhausen, *Ma’aseh Tuviah* by Tobias Cohen, *Tsurat ha-arets* by Abraham ben Hiyya ha-Nasi, *Reshit limudim* by Barukh Lindau and many others.<sup>327</sup> All of these works appear in the Dubno’s auction catalogue. It seems that they might have been very popular at that time and constitute a staple element of many Jewish book collections.

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<sup>326</sup> Cohen, “The Reception of ‘Haskalah’ Literature”, 99.

<sup>327</sup> *Reshimat ha-sefarim asher heniaḥ aḥarav Volf Heyidenheim* (Rödelheim: 1833), 35-37.

## xii. Dubno's collection compared with other Jewish libraries of the time

In order to form an adequate opinion on Dubno's book collection, it is instructive to compare it with the libraries of some of his contemporaries, both Eastern-European Jews and Western maskilim. One of the few extant booklists from Eastern Europe was compiled by a Polish Jew, Rabbi Pinhas Katzenelbogen (1691 - c. 1760), who published it in 1747 in his *Sefer yesh manhilin*. The list encompassed about 400 volumes, including 10 works on grammar and 9 other books on non-rabbinical subjects, such as medicine (*Ma'aseh Tuviah* by Tobias Cohen), history (*Yosippon*) and mathematics (*Maft'e'ah ha-algebrah* by Asher Anshel Worms (d. 1769)). What differentiates this booklist from Dubno's is not only the relatively small number of volumes on secular subjects but also the fact that in most cases, Katzenelbogen owned only one book on any one of these subjects. We can infer from this that he had no deep interest or knowledge in fields such as science or history, and that he might have acquired his volumes on these topics somewhat randomly, without the intention of engaging seriously with their subject matter.

While we do not know the titles of non-rabbinical books that were studied by Jacob Emden, we learn from his *Megilat sefer* that he read works on medicine, natural history, non-Jewish customs and religion, politics and geographical discoveries. Through self-study, he managed to gain a reading proficiency in Dutch, German and Latin. He even gave his permission for a medical student to

participate in an anatomy class on the Sabbath, not hiding his envy of the knowledge that was becoming accessible to that future doctor.<sup>328</sup>

It is interesting to compare Dubno's collection with the auction catalogue of another religious maskil, Wolf Heidenheim (1757 - 1832), whom Dubno met in Frankfurt am Main. Heidenheim owned 743 prints, 72 manuscripts and 12 books authored by himself. About 162 works (one fifth of his library) were devoted to non-rabbinical subjects. Perusal of the two lists reveals that he read the same books as Dubno and shared similar interests.<sup>329</sup> However, Heidenheim seems to have been even less involved in the study of Gentile works - he owned only one volume in a modern language (Mendelssohn's *Phädon*) and one work of non-Jewish philosophy (*Ha-midot* of Aristotle).

Abraham Keyser, a Dutch Jew from a prominent family of Amsterdam communal leaders, compiled a list of the books in his possession in Amsterdam in 1805. According to Hagit Cohen, this book collection indicates that Keyser was neither a professional scholar nor an active maskil. However, just like Dubno, he must have had a vast knowledge of rabbinical literature, which he complemented with books on secular subjects. In Cohen's interpretation, although Keyser regarded his books on non-rabbinical subjects as an integral part of his Jewish literary culture, their presence may point to the modernist tendencies of Amsterdam's Jewish community.<sup>330</sup>

With few exceptions, almost all the books amassed by Dubno were written in Hebrew. Two volumes were composed in Ladino (a translation of *Pirke avot*,

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<sup>328</sup> Emden, *Megilat sefer*, 125-126.

Idem, *Sefer she'elat Yavetz* (Lemberg: 1739), vol. 1, question no. 41, 33b - 38a.

<sup>329</sup> *Reshimat ha-sefarim asher heniah aḥaray Volf Heyidenheim*.

<sup>330</sup> Cohen, "The Reception of 'Haskalah' Literature", 83-105.

RS, quarto 33, no. 634, and *Shir emunim*, a prayer book by Moses ben Jacob Piza [Amsterdam, 1793], RS, octavo 51, no. 413), while several others contained commentaries in Latin.<sup>331</sup> He possessed only a few works in German (*Phädon*, *Die Entdeckung von Amerika*), a language that he probably did not speak, but must have had a decent level of reading comprehension, since otherwise he would not have been able to contribute a commentary to Mendelssohn's German translation of the Pentateuch. He also possessed Leon Modena's Hebrew-Italian dictionary, *Galut Yehudah* ([Venice, 1612] RS, *nishmatim*, quarto 55, no. 2, *Tsemah David* - a Hebrew-Latin-Italian dictionary by David ben Isaac de Pomis (RS, folio 11, no. 368 [Venice, 1587]), and one Hebrew-Portuguese-Spanish lexicon, *Sefer or tov* ([Amsterdam, 1674-75] RS, octavo 41, no. 29). His interest in the Gentile world may be further indicated by the fact that he possessed a copy of *Kol mevaser* by David Friedrichsfeld ([Amsterdam, 1802] RS, octavo 51, no. 391), a Hebrew poem praising the treaty of Amiens which ended the war between Spain, France, and the Batavian Republic.<sup>332</sup> While he was critical of works written in "impure" languages, that is, ones that included lots of loanwords and were grammatically incorrect, such as Yiddish, the Ashkenazi Jewish vernacular,<sup>333</sup> he owned *Em ha-yeled* by Joseph ben Elhanan Heilbronn (RS, octavo 41, no. 48), in which Judeo-German was used to explain the rules of

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<sup>331</sup> For example:

Sebastian Münster, *Kalendarium Hebraicum/Hokhmat Mazalot* ("with Latin" ("im latayn") [Basel, 1527], RS, quarto 22, no. 213).

*Toldot Yeshu* (RS, quarto 30, no. 527; "with Latin", "im latayn", octavo 53, no. 465 [Altdorf, 1681]).

*Sefer yetsirah*, RS, quarto 24, no. 285, "with Latin" ("im latayn") [perhaps: Paris, 1552].

<sup>332</sup> Jozeph Michman, *The History of Dutch Jewry during the Emancipation Period, 1787-1815. Gothic Turrets on a Corinthian Building* (Amsterdam University Press, 1995), 170-177.

<sup>333</sup> Solomon Dubno, "Haskamah" in: Wolf Heidenheim, *Sefer kerovot* (Rödelheim : 1832), 2nd edition, 4a-6b.



Hebrew grammar, and a number of works with commentary in German written in Hebrew characters, such as *Sefer Iyov im targum Ashkenaz* by Isaac Satanow ([Berlin, 1799], RS, octavo 53, no. 494). The small number of Yiddish books in Dubno's inventory makes it similar to the booklist of Wolf Heidenheim, who, just like Dubno, owned only a handful of volumes with German commentaries in Hebrew script.

It is particularly interesting to compare Dubno's library, which reflects an evident reluctance to engage with works written in modern European languages, with the library of his most famous collaborator. The content of Moses Mendelssohn's book collection are known from an auction catalogue, published posthumously in Berlin in 1786.<sup>334</sup> Unfortunately, however, the catalogue describes only the volumes written in foreign languages, while the scope of the Hebrew collection remains unknown. The list includes 1114 books in German, Latin, French, English, Dutch and Spanish, testifying to Mendelssohn's impressive erudition and his interest in such diverse fields as philosophy, science, belles-lettres, history and various other disciplines. The inventory lists, for example, a manuscript copy of the Quran, several works by Baruch Spinoza (excluding the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*), Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz, Immanuel Kant, René Descartes, Thomas Hobbes, Alexandre Pope and Isaac Newton.

Beyond the literary canon of rabbinical and Jewish speculative thought, Dubno's intellectual pursuits, as reflected in his library, were confined to a fairly limited corpus of works written in Hebrew and seem to be quite modest in

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<sup>334</sup> *Verzeichniss der auserlesenen Büchersammlung des seeligen Herrn Moses Mendelssohn* (Soncino-Gesellschaft, 1786).

comparison to those of other maskilim, such as Moses Mendelssohn, Solomon Maimon,<sup>335</sup> or even the 17<sup>th</sup>-century Sephardi Jews of Amsterdam, such as Baruch Spinoza or Isaac Aboab da Fonseca (1606-1693), who owned works by Thomas Hobbes, Niccolò Machiavelli and Michel de Montaigne, as well as classical literature in Greek and Latin.<sup>336</sup> Dubno's collection may reflect his apprehension about studying Gentile books, which was probably the reason why he relied almost exclusively on scientific works either written in Hebrew by Jewish scholars or translated into Hebrew from other languages.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, Dubno's literary interests were shaped by both his educational background and his exposure to the intellectual climate of Berlin and Amsterdam. His passion for the Hebrew language, together with his interest in medieval Jewish philosophy, history, and literature, distinguishes him from the traditional scholarly elite who concentrated mainly on rabbinics.<sup>337</sup> Nevertheless, in contrast to the followers of the Berlin Jewish Enlightenment, Dubno was not ready to engage with books written by non-Jewish authors and owned very few books written in languages other than Hebrew. His sojourn in Amsterdam exposed him to the intellectual achievements of Sephardic culture, which can be exemplified by the fact that he discovered Luzzato's manuscript of *La-yesharim*

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<sup>335</sup> Maimon did not leave an inventory of his books, but in his autobiography he mentions reading books on physics, optics and medicine. Maimon, *An Autobiography*, 41-42.

<sup>336</sup> Marx, *Studies in Jewish History*, 210-213; Berger, "Codices Gentium", 7.

<sup>337</sup> Feiner, "Seductive Science..."

*tehilah* in the Library of Ets Hayim and republished it with his introductory comment.<sup>338</sup> Besides Luzzatto, numerous other Sephardic authors and poets are present in the auction catalogue. Also, the scholarly atmosphere of the city fit in well with Dubno's own interest in the study of Hebrew grammar, which he first developed in his homeland. While it is difficult to assess to what extent Dubno was affected by the Sephardic culture of Amsterdam, it seems that he was well acquainted with the Sephardic literary circles and their work.

Dubno's extraordinarily rich book collection indicates that throughout his life, he was propelled by his intellectual preoccupations and ambition: he immigrated to Amsterdam in order to gain easier access to Hebrew books; he devoted all his efforts to the study and popularisation of Hebrew, and he invested a substantial part of his income in books despite his poverty. The comparison between his booklist of 1771 and the sales catalogue of 1814 suggests that he was interested in the same branches of knowledge throughout his life and he formed a growing collection of books on rabbinical subjects, Kabbalah, grammar, belles-lettres, poetry and history. Even if one assumes that the auction catalogue reflects primarily the interests of Dubno's customers, and not his own, his booklist of 1771 is very similar in content, which, in this case, shows that his intellectual profile fit in well with the Jewish readers of Amsterdam. The analysis of Dubno's auction catalogue shows that out of about 1,880 titles, one sixth were not rabbinical but represented fields of knowledge that would appeal to the followers of Jewish Enlightenment. Taking into consideration Dubno's commitment to the halakhically ordained religious lifestyle, his sensitivity to the denunciation of secular studies by many members of the rabbinical elite, and the traditional duty

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<sup>338</sup> See page 267.

to devote as much time as possible to religious learning, the number of non-rabbinical works he possessed is impressively high. The presence of several books on Kabbalah and science allows us to assume that for Dubno (just as for Abraham Yagel in David Ruderman's interpretation), these two fields of knowledge were interrelated, and since the boundaries between them were blurred, only the study of both could provide a complete understanding of the universe.<sup>339</sup> Since in his writings he never referred to volumes of Hebrew poetry or to science books he possessed, it is possible that he purchased them out of personal interest, or in order to sell them. However, since he had only one copy of most of the items in these categories, it can be assumed that they formed part of his private book collection.

According to Shmuel Feiner, the maskilic library represented a critique of intellectual conservatism and was therefore revolutionary in character.<sup>340</sup> By contrast, Irene Zwiep emphasises that the new eighteenth-century library of Dutch Jewry combined traditional and contemporary, secular and religious, Hebrew literature in a complementary manner.<sup>341</sup> This characterisation of the Dutch Jewish intellectual climate can be applied to Dubno as well, whose worldview and reading preferences would seem to be closer to those of the Amsterdam Jews than to the Berlin maskilim. While the booklist of Katzenelbogen can serve as an example of an haphazard collection, Dubno's inventory of 1814 and his booklist of 1771, listing several works on every field of human knowledge,

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<sup>339</sup> Ruderman, *Kabbalah*, 88, 163.

<sup>340</sup> Feiner, *Jewish Enlightenment*, 67; idem, "Towards a Historical Definition of the Haskalah", 206-208.

<sup>341</sup> Zwiep, "Jewish Enlightenment Reconsidered", 279-309.

reflects an attempt to create a library encompassing different branches of both secular and religious studies.

## **Chapter 2: Dubno and the publication of the Biur**

### **The publication of the Biur**

According to Abraham Geiger, the Jews, for whom the Hebrew Bible was a foundational text, viewed it not as an ancient book but rather as a living reflection of the present. Consequently, every new movement in the history of Judaism charged the Hebrew Bible with its own worldview.<sup>342</sup> The publication in 1783 of *Sefer netivot ha-shalom* (also known as Biur), the German translation of the Pentateuch accompanied by a new Hebrew commentary (Hebr. *be'ur*, after which the whole publication became known as Biur), and *Tikun soferim*, was one of the major accomplishments of the German Haskalah movement. Heinrich Graetz even compared the undertaking to Martin Luther's German translation of the Bible.<sup>343</sup> However, while the poor command of Hebrew might have necessitated the publication of a new Pentateuch edition with a translation into a modern language in Prussia, in the Netherlands the study of Hebrew was not neglected and, consequently, the publication of *Sefer netivot ha-shalom* did not have such an impact as in the German lands.

The German Pentateuch and the accompanying Hebrew commentary, which was largely based on rabbinical literature, were the fruits of the convergence of Jewish religious tradition and new cultural trends. Jews were now acquiring knowledge of the secular sciences, achieving good command of the

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<sup>342</sup> Abraham Geiger, *Urschrift und Übersetzungen der Bibel* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Mada, 1928), 72.

<sup>343</sup> Graetz, *History of the Jews*, vol. 5, 335.

German language, and exposed to the universalistic values of the Enlightenment ideology, which was espoused by Jews and Gentiles alike.<sup>344</sup>

As the *Biur* contributed to the spread of a modern, non-Jewish, language among the German Jewish population, and since it aspired to do so by means of Torah study, certain sections of the traditional rabbinical elite regarded it with suspicion as a tool of acculturation, which would increase the risk that Jews, especially the young, would assimilate into Gentile society. Since the other Jewish Pentateuch translations available at that time were in Yiddish or in ancient languages that were no longer easily understood by contemporary readers, such as Aramaic, *Sefer netivot ha-shalom* constituted a revolutionary innovation in the field of modern Jewish Torah study.

In their criticism of Yiddish, both Mendelssohn and Dubno stated that one needs to speak correctly in every language, be it Hebrew or any modern language.<sup>345</sup> Both of them supported the idea of Jewish bilingualism of German and Hebrew, with the latter reserved for written communication only. While Mendelssohn agreed with Dubno that studying grammar could help a student master the Hebrew language, he still believed that Hebrew, in contrast to German, would remain a “dead” language.<sup>346</sup> Dubno did not regard studying German as a priority, but rather as an educational aid for the purpose of Torah study and, after he withdrew from the *Biur* project, he seems to temporarily have abandoned his support for using German translation in Jewish Pentateuch

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<sup>344</sup> Edward Breuer, *The Limits of Enlightenment: Jews, Germans, and the Eighteenth-century Study of Scripture* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Center for Jewish Studies, 1996) 20-22.

<sup>345</sup> GSJ, Vol. 7, 2; Heidenheim, *Sefer kerovot*, 4a-6b.

<sup>346</sup> Schatz, *Sprache in der Zerstreung*, 55-59.

editions. It is possible that, being a Yiddish speaker himself, he had only a passive understanding of high German. By contrast, Mendelssohn frequently communicated in German and even denounced the Prussian king, Frederic II, for preferring French over his native tongue.<sup>347</sup> While not a single work or letter, preserved to our times, was composed by Dubno in Yiddish, Mendelssohn seems to have a more tolerant attitude at least in his private correspondence, in which he resorted quite regularly to writing in this language.<sup>348</sup>

The Hebrew titles of the German Pentateuch translation, of Mendelssohn's *Or la-netivah*, an introduction to the translation, and of Dubno's *Alim li-terufah*, a prospectus denoting the content and encouraging subscription to the Biur, all point to the twin goals of the enterprise - the renewal of the Hebrew language and the Torah study among Jews in Prussia. The phrase *netivot ha-shalom*, which means 'the paths of peace', is taken from Proverbs 3:17, where it refers to wisdom ("Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace"<sup>349</sup>). The title of the introduction to the translation, *Or la-netivah*, meaning 'a light to the path', was inspired by Psalm 119:105 ("Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path"), while the title of Dubno's prospectus, *Alim li-terufah*, meaning 'leaves for healing', was derived from Ezekiel 47:12 and alludes to Ezekiel's vision of the rebuilt Jerusalem in which a life-giving stream flows from the threshold of the Temple gate to the Dead Sea, turning it into a place brimming with life ("And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months,

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<sup>347</sup> GS, Vol. 4.2, 68.

<sup>348</sup> See for example: GSJ, vol. 19, letters no. 40, 43, 56.

<sup>349</sup> Unless indicated otherwise, all biblical quotes come from the King James Bible.



because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine”). *Sefer netivot ha-shalom* can thus be compared to the leaves of trees growing on the banks of a river which draws the healing power of its water from a stream originating in the Temple.<sup>350</sup>

The German Pentateuch edition started as a joint enterprise between Mendelssohn, who authored the translation, and Dubno, who was commissioned to write an introductory grammatical treatise and a commentary on the German text. As it turned out, however, as the work proved to be more laborious and more costly than was first anticipated, other scholars became involved in the project. Furthermore, a conflict emerged between Mendelssohn and Dubno, which seems to have had both financial and intellectual considerations at its basis, and since the differences between them were irreconcilable, Dubno abandoned the project and alienated himself from the Berlin Haskalah by temporarily moving back to Eastern Europe, where he embarked on a new enterprise – a publication of his own Pentateuch edition.

### **The conflict between Mendelssohn and Dubno**

Altmann estimates that Dubno’s withdrawal from the project took place sometime in the autumn of 1780, following Mendelssohn’s negative reply to a plea expressed by Dubno in a letter dated September 22, 1780, in which he asked Mendelssohn in vain to publish his own introductory essay and Masoretic notes,

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<sup>350</sup> Henry Englander, “Mendelssohn as Translator and Exegete”, *Hebrew Union College Annual* 6 (1929), 348.

Weinberg cautiously remarks that it was not necessarily Mendelssohn but perhaps Dubno who suggested these titles. GSJ, vol. 15.1, xiii.

*Tikun soferim*,<sup>351</sup> which Mendelssohn clearly had judged to be too long and too technical for the average prospective reader of the German Pentateuch.<sup>352</sup> Following Dubno's withdrawal from work on the Biur, only the first four pages of his introduction and excerpts from his *Tikun soferim* were published in *Sefer netivot ha-shalom*.<sup>353</sup> The disagreement of Dubno and Mendelssohn on the importance of *Tikun soferim* can serve as an indication of their respective expectations of the project. Mendelssohn wished the Biur to be accessible to the German Jewish readers and he did not see Dubno's scribal emendations as a useful educational tool for teaching biblical Hebrew to Jewish youth. For Dubno, the main objective was to provide the readers with a correct version of the Hebrew text, even if the majority of them would not understand all the intricacies of the content of *Tikun soferim*. Taking into account that in a letter to Mendelssohn, Dubno describes his work on the introduction and scribal emendations as a religious endeavour that would secure his fate in the afterlife,<sup>354</sup> it is possible that he ascribed to the publication of the Biur a more spiritual rather than practical function, which explains why he would not be concerned by the inaccessibility of his work as much as Mendelssohn.

According to Altmann, Dubno did not fully understand the main goal of Mendelssohn's project; his rather technical introduction, focusing on Hebrew-grammar, did not meet Mendelssohn's expectations. Consequently, the latter

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<sup>351</sup> Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn*, 405-406.

<sup>352</sup> Ibid. 399; Breuer, *The Limits of Enlightenment*, 24, 27, 174.

<sup>353</sup> See: GSJ, vol. 15.1, 15-18.

Breuer suggests that the beginning of Dubno's introduction might have been included in the publication because its typesetting had already been completed before Dubno abandoned the project. Breuer, *The Limits of Enlightenment*, 285, n. 24.

<sup>354</sup> GSJ, vol. 19, 258; see page 183.

decided to compose his own introductory essay, which was first published, separately from the Pentateuch translation, in November 1782.<sup>355</sup> In it Mendelssohn stated that his decision to publish the introduction in this way was a response to enquires about the methods and principles employed in the translation, and that the essay was called *Or la-netivah* because both he, the translator, and the authors of the commentary “walked in its light.” In contrast to Dubno’s grammatical focus, Mendelssohn elaborated on the philosophical aspects of the work, relying heavily on Maimonides’ *Milot ha-higayon*, on which he had composed a commentary in 1760.<sup>356</sup>

Moreover, although Mendelssohn acknowledged the relevance of *Tikun soferim* to Hebrew grammarians,<sup>357</sup> it seems that he himself viewed the study of grammar as unimportant.<sup>358</sup> He considered Dubno’s scribal emendations largely superfluous to the purpose of *Sefer netivot ha-shalom*, whose goal was to educate the average German-speaking Jewish reader rather than to train grammarians with specialist knowledge of the Masoretic notes. While admitting that Dubno’s essay was useful, he argued that “their [grammatical matters’] place is not at the beginning of this work”.<sup>359</sup> Dubno, who had invested a considerable amount of effort in composing his introduction and *Tikun soferim*, could not easily accept Mendelssohn’s decision to abridge or completely reject his work. Irene

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<sup>355</sup> Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn*, 399.

<sup>356</sup> GSJ, vol. 15.1, lvii.

<sup>357</sup> Letter to Avigdor Levi, GSJ, vol. 19, 252: “It is a nice composition, very useful to Torah scribes and grammarians specialising in punctuation and accentuation.”

”והוא חבור נחמד רב התועלת לסופרי התורה ולמדקקים באותיות ונקודות וטעמים.”

<sup>358</sup> Mendelssohn, *Or la-netivah*, GSJ, vol. 14, 248 - “[...] because we are not lacking in books of grammar, and I will not add another one to their number.”

”(...) כי לא חסרי ספרי דקדוק הלשון אנו, שאבוא אני להוסיף על מספרם עוד אחד.”

<sup>359</sup> *Ibid.*

”אין מקום לענינים הללו בראש החבור הזה.”

Zwiep suggested Mendelssohn regarded Dubno's contribution to *Sefer netivot ha-shalom* as belonging to the sphere of textual criticism, while Dubno considered his work as grammatical. The assumption that Mendelssohn and Dubno perceived the latter's work as, respectively, textual and grammatical, might explain differences in their evaluation of *Tikun soferim*, to which Mendelssohn ascribed much smaller value than Dubno.<sup>360</sup> The discord between the two was additionally exacerbated by the financial difficulties the project was encountering, as a result of which Dubno was not paid his salary.<sup>361</sup>

As we learn from David Friedländer's letter to Yosef Pesseles, the conflict between Mendelssohn and Dubno had escalated to the point of being subject to legal proceedings at a rabbinical court in Berlin. According to this letter, Mendelssohn's claim in *Or la-netivah* that Dubno had withdrawn from the project "out of his modesty" was prompted by his reluctance to mention the fact that the dispute was to be resolved by a rabbinical court. The court apparently ruled that Dubno should resume the work he had abandoned, and that he should be paid all the money that had been allocated to the project at that time, with the exception of a small salary, the amount of which Friedländer did not remember, which was reserved for Saul, Mendelssohn's brother and Dubno's co-worker. Moreover, all the income that would be generated from publication of the project belonged to Dubno alone. Despite all this, Dubno left Berlin in a state of extreme anger, while Mendelssohn kept paying for the project out of his own pocket, having already invested in it 1,000 reichthaler.<sup>362</sup>

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<sup>360</sup> Private communication. See also also n. 411.

<sup>361</sup> GSJ, vol. 19, letter no. 237, 259.

<sup>362</sup> Samuel Joseph Fuenn, *Sofre Yisra'el* (Vilna: 1871), 138-142.

As Weinberg has noticed, neither Mendelssohn nor Dubno ever mentioned these court proceedings in any of their letters or publications. Friedländer's letter is the only extant evidence on the legal dimension of the conflict between the two, on which all of Mendelssohn's biographers remain silent, and whose precise nature consequently remains unknown. It is also surprising that Dubno ignored the outcome of the trial, which was so clearly favourable to him.<sup>363</sup> Mendelssohn himself is adamant in his letter of 1781 to Avigdor Levi, that he was not the one to blame for the dispute with Dubno, and he expresses the hope that they might reconcile the differences between them in the future.<sup>364</sup> In his introduction to the German Pentateuch translation, *Or la-netivah*, he claims that he is unaware of the reasons for Dubno's abandonment of the project but suggested that Dubno may have been discouraged by the heavy burden of work and the lack of prospective financial gains:

"He [Dubno] had begun to print his introduction at the beginning of the book, but he did not complete it [namely, the printing of the full text]. For prior to its completion, a 'strange spirit'<sup>365</sup> came upon him. I do not know what happened to him. He left me and returned to his native country. Maybe this was the reason: when he agreed to undertake the work, he may have believed himself able to complete it within a year or two and receive the full reward of his labours.<sup>366</sup> I, too, imagined that this would be the case. Yet when it became plain that the work was protracted and

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<sup>363</sup> GSJ, vol. 15.1, cxxviii-cxxxix, n.101.

<sup>364</sup> See: "An Avigdor Levi, Berlin 1781" in: GSJ, vol. 19, letter no. 248, 279.

<sup>365</sup> *ru'ah aheret*.

<sup>366</sup> In the prospectus Dubno expresses the hope that publication of *Sefer netivot ha-shalom* would start in 1779.

exceedingly heavy, that it required much toil and assiduity day by day, that the cost of printing was constantly rising and that all the money so lavishly contributed by my supporters would not suffice to pay for the high quality paper and the high cost of production (which amounted to thirty five hundred thalers), he grew weary, his strength flagged, and he despaired of receiving any reward whatever.”<sup>367</sup>

Mendelssohn suggested that Dubno had abandoned the project because it was too time- and work-consuming. His claim that Dubno did not complete the introduction to the German Pentateuch was likely to contribute to the impression of the latter’s incompetence that Mendelssohn apparently wished to create. While Mendelssohn mentions briefly some financial issues, he is silent about the Berlin rabbinical court, which had ruled in favour of Dubno. Dubno hit back in his *Birkat Yosef*, a pamphlet and a poem on the importance of study of the books of the Tanakh that do not belong to the Torah, that he dedicated to a *siyum*<sup>368</sup> celebrating the completion of re-writing the books of Prophets on the 7th of Adar (February 9, 1783) in Vilna, and to Yosef Pesseles, who hosted Dubno during that time.<sup>369</sup> In *Birkat Yosef*, Dubno accused Mendelssohn of avarice and his other collaborators of parting with traditional Judaism.<sup>370</sup> In fact, it is known from a letter that Dubno wrote to Mendelssohn in 1780 that he had not been paid at all for three years of his work, and that he offered to renounce a certain proportion

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<sup>367</sup> GSJ, vol. 14, 246-247. Translation taken from Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn*, 401.

<sup>368</sup> *Siyum* - the completion of any unit of Torah, Mishnah or Talmud, usually followed by a festive meal.

<sup>369</sup> The seventh day of Adar is the traditional date of birth, and, one hundred twenty years later, the death of Moses. The day is usually marked by a fast.

<sup>370</sup> Kamenetsky, “Haskamot,” *Yeshurun* 10 (2002), 767.

of his due salary if that amount would be spent on the publication of his entire introduction, which he obviously had completed.<sup>371</sup> Dubno explained that for him it was more important to have the work published than to be paid:

"Please remember your servant, and how I treated you truthfully, straightforwardly, and devotedly. I did not want to receive 40 reichstalers for every six months of work, which you had promised to me together with your friends (...) three years ago out of the money earned from subscriptions [to the publication]. [My due salary] already amounts to 240 reichstalers, which I refused to take. I made it clear that my main goal is to publish my work (...). Please remember that I have now lost four years' income by committing myself to my work on this book. I did not take care either of myself or of my son (...). Now I am asking for 80 reichstalers, so that I can publish the whole introduction and not see my work go to waste. (...) And if you refuse to listen to me, please let me come to your house and speak to you about this. (...)"<sup>372</sup>

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<sup>371</sup> See: Dubno's letter to Mendelssohn of September 22, 1780, GSJ, vol. 19, letter no. 237, 258-261.

<sup>372</sup> Ibid.

זכר נא לעבדך את אשר התהלכתי לפניך באמת ובתמים ובלב שלם, ולא רצייתי לקבל מ'ר"ט בכל חצי שנה שכר טרחתי אשר אותם הוכחות לתת לי עם ריעיך (...) זה שלש שנים, מקופת מעות החתומים, ואם יצטרפו יחד כבוד הי' לי כעת ר"ם ר"ט, ואנכי מאנתי לקבלם, כי גליתי דעתי, כי אין עקר כוונתי רק להוציא לאור מעשה ידי (...) זכר נא לי את אשר השכלתי כל פרנסתי מנגד, זה ארבעה שנים, לשקוד בחפץ נפשי על חבור הספר הזה, ולא הסתי על נפשי ולא על בני יחידי (...). עתה אבקש רק לתת לי בעד שנה אחת פ' ר"ט, למען אוכל להדפיס ההקדמה כולה, כי איככה אוכל וראיתי באבדן מעשה ידי? (...) ואם בכל אלא לא תרצה אמרי, אבקש ממך אדוני! להרשות אותי לבא באהל ביתך לדבר עמך פא"פ בעבור זה (...).

Given that Dubno was not paid for three or four years of his work,<sup>373</sup> Mendelssohn's reference to greed as his motive seems to be unjustified. Yosef Pesseles in his letter to David Friedländer, dated February 3, 1783, described Dubno's reaction to Mendelssohn's *Or la-netivah* :

"His [Dubno's] face darkened when he saw the words written about him, that he [Mendelssohn] did not know what happened to him [Dubno]. (...) While I was discussing the various aspects of the matter for the sake of restoring peace between these two perfect men - for in my humble view Rabbi Solomon, too, may be called a whole-hearted and perfect man - he grew impatient and displayed a whole file of documents (...) in an effort to refute by an abundance of arguments what our teacher Rabbi Moses had said in his *Or la-netivah*."<sup>374</sup>

One can speculate that not all the rulings of the rabbinical court were as favourable to Dubno as those mentioned by Friedländer in his letter, and that Friedländer chose to omit, for example, that the financial ruling in Dubno's favour could not have been implemented. The fact that Mendelssohn was forced to subsidise the project out of his own pocket suggests that it was a financial failure and that Dubno's salary would not have been paid even if he had decided to stay in Berlin. Tychsen reported that the price of a high quality copy of the publication amounted to five reichsthaler, while the cheaper version cost four reichsthaler

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<sup>373</sup> Dubno states twice in his letter that he has not been paid. In one part of the letter he mentions three years of due salary, in another one he claims that he has not been paid for four years.

<sup>374</sup> Fuenn, *Sofre Yisra'el*, 139. Translation taken from Altmann, *Mendelssohn*, 401-402.



and two Louis d'or groschen<sup>375</sup>. While the exact number of copies sold in each of the two price brackets remains unknown, we do know that in total 750 volumes were purchased by subscribers.<sup>376</sup> Therefore, the income that could have been earned from subscriptions had to be somewhere between 3,750 reichthaler (assuming that all the volumes were acquired at the higher price of five reichthaler) and 3,063 reichsthaler and ten groschen (assuming that all the volumes except for one were acquired at the lower price). Since Mendelssohn reported in *Or la-netivah* that the cost of printing the more expensive version of *Sefer netivot ha-shalom* amounted to 3,500 reichsthaler, it can be concluded that the publishing costs of the German translation were much higher than all the income generated from subscriptions. Taking this into consideration, it is not surprising that Dubno did not receive his wages for three or four years. One can assume that the court ruling that granted all the subscriptions income to Dubno did not alter his material circumstances, as all that money had already been spent. Presumably, work on the project continued thanks to additional financial support provided by Mendelssohn himself and by other maskilim, whom Mendelssohn thanked in his *Or la-netivah* for their support,<sup>377</sup> but Dubno was obviously not entitled to any of that extra funding.

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<sup>375</sup> 1 reichstaler = 24 groschen.

Tychsen, Oluf Gerhard, Mendelssohns "Probe einer deutschen Übersetzung der 5 Bücher Mose" in: *Gelehrte Beiträge zu den Mecklenburg-Schwerinischen Nachrichten* (1778), 37-39. Reprinted in: Siegfried Silberstein, "Mendelssohn and Mecklenburg, B. Tychsen und Mendelssohn", *ZGJD 1* (1929-1930), 286-287, n. 17.

<sup>376</sup> Steven M. Lowenstein, "The Readership of Mendelssohn's Bible Translation," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 53 (1982) 180.

<sup>377</sup> Mendelssohn, *Or la-netivah*, GSJ, vol. 14, 244.

## Dubno's role in the publication of the Biur

Dubno's role in the creation process of the Biur is often underestimated or completely overlooked by historians. For example, Dominique Bourel describes him as an incompetent scholar, adding that despite his alleged shortcomings Dubno had merit in gaining new subscribers to the German Pentateuch, as well as the favourable opinions of the rabbis.<sup>378</sup> However, taking into consideration Dubno's erudition and devotion to his work, as well as the fact that the commentary authored by Herz Homberg was of a lesser quality than those authored by Dubno, Mendelssohn and Wessely, this criticism can be refuted.<sup>379</sup> Michael Meyer, too, regards Moses Mendelssohn as highly independent of his collaborators in the process of translating the Pentateuch. He credits Dubno mainly with the merit of persuading Mendelssohn to publish the work, as the latter was at first unwilling to do so.<sup>380</sup> Gustav Karpeles criticises Dubno for abandoning Mendelssohn's project out of "literary vanity".<sup>381</sup> By contrast, Alexander Altmann emphasises the significance of Dubno's contribution to the Biur and describes him as an outstanding scholar who has not been duly appreciated by the academic world. Moreover, he speculates that without Dubno, *Sefer netivot ha-*

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<sup>378</sup> Dominique Bourel, *Moses Mendelssohn: la naissance du judaïsme moderne* (Paris: Gallimard, 2004), 371-372.

<sup>379</sup> GS, vol. 5, letter no. 7, 666 - Mendelssohn's letter to Herz Homberg, Berlin, June 27, 1783: "Your first production is really not worthy of you. In order to expiate your sins, I know no better advice than to make them forgotten through better works." ("Ihre erste Production ist freilich Ihrer nicht würdig. Die Sünde zu büßen, weiß ich keinen bessern Rath, als solche durch bessere Arbeiten in Vergessenheit zu bringen.") See also Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn*, 417-418.

<sup>380</sup> Michael A. Meyer, *The Origins of the Modern Jew: Jewish Identity and European Culture in Germany, 1749-1824* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1979), 43.

<sup>381</sup> Gustav Karpeles, *Jewish Literature and Other Essays* (Library of Alexandria, 1985), 309.

*shalom* would never have been published.<sup>382</sup> Heinrich Graetz similarly views Dubno as an excellent scholar, “a praiseworthy exception to his countrymen”, who was manipulated by the rabbinical elite into withdrawing from participation in the publication of the German Pentateuch.<sup>383</sup> By contrast, David Kamenetsky believes that Mendelssohn took advantage of Dubno’s expertise. While for Dubno the only goal of the undertaking was to popularise the correct understanding of the Torah, Mendelssohn wanted to use the German translation as a means of integrating Jews into Gentile society. Dubno’s participation in the project could be used as a smokescreen for Jewish acculturation, as he was widely known for his piety and traditional religious worldview.<sup>384</sup>

Edward Breuer acknowledges Dubno’s major role in the creation of the *Biur*. He presents him as an example of a *maskil* who espoused the ideas of the Enlightenment with a certain degree of criticism. Despite his wish for internalisation of some aspects of European culture, he was aware of the threats that this process would pose to rabbinical Judaism.<sup>385</sup> His assertion that Dubno adopted some aspects of the Enlightenment programme can be considered true to a certain extent as long as it is acknowledged that this happened indirectly, through the mediation of the *Haskalah*. Dubno himself did

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<sup>382</sup> Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn*, 355, 371.

<sup>383</sup> Heinrich Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden von den ältesten Zeiten bis auf die Gegenwart: Geschichte der Juden vom Beginn der Mendelssohn'schen Zeit (1750) bis in die neueste Zeit* (1848), vol. 11 (Leipzig: Oskar Leiner, 1870), 42. The translated quotation was taken from Heinrich Graetz, *History of the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1949), vol. 5, 329.

<sup>384</sup> David Kamenetsky, “Haskamot”, *Yeshurun* 8, 733. For Mendelssohn’s expression of the wish for acculturation, which the publication of the German Pentateuch would facilitate (“Der erste Schritt zur Cultur”), see his letter to August Hennings of June 29, 1779, Strelitz, in: *GSJ*, vol. 12.2, letter no. 490, 149. For a discussion of this statement, see: Breuer, *The Limits of Enlightenment*, 153-155.

<sup>385</sup> Breuer, *The Limits of Enlightenment*, 228.

not show any signs of involvement with the European Enlightenment and it is unknown to what extent he was familiar with European thought, if at all. While he did express criticism of Christian Bible scholarship in his *Alim li-terufah*,<sup>386</sup> he never directly refers to non-Jewish Enlightenment thinkers in his writings.

David Assaf and Eliahu Stern present Dubno as a link between the Vilna Gaon and the maskilim, which serves them as proof that the traditional Jewish scholars of the time did not disapprove of Mendelssohn's idea whereby there was a genuine need for a new commentary on the Torah.<sup>387</sup> At first, as there is no proof that Dubno knew the Vilna Gaon in person, Assaf's and Stern's perception of Dubno as a bridge between Elijah ben Solomon Zalman and Moses Mendelssohn may seem a bit far-fetched. Dubno spent a considerable amount of time in both the Berlin circle of maskilim and among the more tradition-oriented Jews of Vilna. However, he did not try to introduce maskilic ideas into the Lithuanian community, but rather suggested publishing a Pentateuch edition that would meet the needs of the local Jewry and include Masoretic emendation and a Hebrew commentary, while at the same it would fully subscribe to the Jewish textual tradition, without involving any translations into modern languages. The fact that Dubno was able to function in those two different worlds, the maskilic and the traditional one, can be interpreted as yet another example of the plurivocal nature of the Jewish Enlightenment, in which different, often contradictory ideas were put forward at the same time. Dubno can be seen as a mediator between two different Jewish intellectual circles because he was a member of the early Haskalah movement, and he tried to modify the Jewish

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<sup>386</sup> See page 161.

<sup>387</sup> David Assaf, *Untold Tales of the Hasidim: Crisis and Discontent in the History of Hasidism* (UPNE, 2012), 23-24; Stern, *The Genius*, 70.

textual heritage to a certain extent, without making any radical changes. Therefore, it can be said that Breuer's observation of Dubno's attitude is certainly correct, but the rationale behind his behaviour is most probably not a conscious criticism of the Enlightenment movement.

While Mendelssohn was often idealised by both his contemporaries and later historians, Dubno's contribution has tended to be undervalued as a result of prejudices on the part of some scholars, who disapproved of Dubno's traditional worldview<sup>388</sup> or his withdrawal from publication of the *Biur*, which caused quite a stir in the community of German maskilim.<sup>389</sup> By contrast, others saw him as a victim of discrimination on the part of the Prussian Jews who looked down on him on account of his Polish origins.<sup>390</sup>

As the personal views and literary activity of Mendelssohn still raise controversy, it is instructive to examine in-depth the work and worldview of Solomon Dubno, one of his closest collaborators on the publication of the German Pentateuch translation. Dubno's views on Mendelssohn as expressed in his *Birkat Yosef*, his private correspondence, and his collection of rabbinic approbations reveal a picture of Mendelssohn that differs significantly from the way in which he is described by his admirers. Consequently, the often ambiguous reconstructions of the circumstances in which *Sefer netivot ha-shalom* was published demand cautious analysis.

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<sup>388</sup> Yosef Klausner, *Hištoriyah shel ha-sifrut ha-ivrit ha-ḥadashah* (Jerusalem: Hotsa'at Sefarim Ahiyasaf, 1952), vol. 1, 73.

<sup>389</sup> Moshe Samet, "Mendelssohn, Veisel ve-rabbanei doram," in: *Mehkarim be-toldot am-Yisra'el ve-Erets-Yisra'el le-zekher Tzvi Avineri* (Haifa: University of Haifa, 1970), 234-236.

<sup>390</sup> Smolenskin, Perets, "She'elat Yehudim - she'elat ḥayim", *Ha-Shahar* (1879), n. 2 (available at: [http://benyehuda.org/smolenskin/article\\_005.html](http://benyehuda.org/smolenskin/article_005.html)); Sandler Perets, *Ha-Be'ur la-Torah shel Mosheh Mendelssohn ve-si'ato* (Jerusalem: R. Mass, 1984), 16.

Mendelssohn's significant achievement was preceded by his earlier works on biblical textual criticism. These included his *Sefer Megilat Kohelet* (Berlin, 1770), an essay on Ecclesiastes, which was followed by the translation of the Song of Deborah (Berlin, 1780), a German translation of the Psalms (Berlin, 1783), and a translation of the Song of Songs (Berlin, 1788), published posthumously. For Mendelssohn, the need for a new German translation followed not least from Christian emendations of the Scripture, of which he expressed criticism in private correspondence.<sup>391</sup> However, according to Mendelssohn's own testimony, it was Dubno who initiated the publication of *Sefer netivot ha-shalom*. In *Or la-netivah*, an introduction to the Biur, Mendelssohn gives an account of Dubno when he saw the German translation of the Pentateuch for the first time:

"The Lord sent me our teacher and master, Rabbi Solomon of Dubno (may his lamp be bright) to teach my son (...). When the afore-mentioned rabbi [Dubno] saw the Torah translation in my hands, he liked it and found it useful. He therefore asked for my permission to have it printed for the benefit of students who, by the grace of God, were able to appreciate poetic<sup>392</sup> language. I consented [to his proposal] on condition that [in a commentary to be written by him] he carefully point out where in my translation I had decided to follow the view of some earlier commentator and where I had departed from all previously expressed views and had chosen a different interpretation that seemed to me to be more in accord

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<sup>391</sup> GSJ, vol. 12.2, 33, 42-43.

<sup>392</sup> Literally: "of parable and figurative expression" (*mashal u-melitsah*).

with the ways of the [Hebrew] language, as well as with the context and the massoretic marks of intonation. He was to examine all these points, argue with me [if necessary], and embody all this in a book explaining the verses [of the Pentateuch] in language readily comprehensible to the reader. At the same time, I faithfully promised to help him to the best of my ability in the composition and writing of this commentary [Biur].”<sup>393</sup>

The translation of the Torah into German was a major undertaking, demanding a great deal of effort and time. For this reason, numerous scholars have rejected Mendelssohn’s claim that he had first embarked on his Pentateuch translation solely for the benefit of his children, only later deciding to have it published. It is more probable that from the very start, his ambition was to reach a wider Jewish public, and his presentation of the work to Dubno was not accidental, as he hoped that the Polish tutor, known for his pedagogical zeal, would propose of his own accord that the translation should be published. In addition, Mendelssohn’s account in *Or la-netivah* of his first encounter with Dubno can be interpreted as his attempt to present himself as a passive participant in the Biur project, which came to fruition only thanks to Dubno, to Providence, and to sheer good fortune. By engaging a collaborator he might have hoped to shift attention from himself – who was known primarily for his active involvement in the German Enlightenment – to Dubno, who was a religious Jew with no connections to the Gentile world. This manoeuvre would have been designed to

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<sup>393</sup> GSJ, vol. 14, 243-244. The translation was taken from Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn*, 371.

dispel the suspicion that the publication had Jewish assimilation as its covert purpose.<sup>394</sup> In fact, in his introduction Mendelssohn states:

“God knows that from the beginning I never intended, I never hoped to gain any financial profit or to yield any benefit from this enterprise. I would not have lent my name [to the project] if the above-mentioned rabbi had not asked me for it so that more people would desire [the book] and shake gold out of their purses. The printing costs were very high, and the means would not have sufficed if my charitable coreligionists had not helped him with their subscriptions.”<sup>395</sup>

The participation of Mendelssohn’s brother, Saul, was mentioned in *Or la-netivah* as a prerequisite for Dubno’s involvement in the project, possibly in order to guarantee that Mendelssohn would be able to oversee Dubno’s daily work, or else in order to secure some employment for Mendelssohn’s professionally unsuccessful brother, who did not seem to have the scholarly competence required for this task.<sup>396</sup>

“I gave him [Dubno] one more condition - that he would include my brother, our teacher and master Rabbi Saul, may his lamp be bright, in the task of

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<sup>394</sup> Weinbeg, GSJ, vol. 15.1, xxii-xxiii; Sandler, *Ha-be’ur la-Torah*, 10-11.

<sup>395</sup> GSJ, vol. 14, 244.

“והנה ה' הוא היודע ועד כי לא עלתה על דעתי מראש, אף לא קוייתי להשיג בצע כסף או תועלת כבוד במלאכה זו, ולא רצייתי להקרא שמי עליה, לולי בקש מאתי הרב הנ"ל לעשות כן, למען רבות החושקים בו והזלים זהב מכיסם: כי הוצאות הדפוס רבו עד מאוד, ואין ידו משגת דים, לולי יתנדבו אנשי בריתי הנדיבים לבא על החתום ולהיות בעזרתו.”

<sup>396</sup> GSJ, vol. 15.1, cxxiv, f80.

Letter to Avigdor Levi (Berlin, 25 May 1779), GSJ, vol. 19, 252. *Or la-netivah*: GSJ, vol. 14, 244.



printing and scrupulous proofreading. They shall have like portions (Deuteronomy 18:8) of the reward of their labor [...].”<sup>397</sup>

Initially, Dubno planned to compile a commentary on all the five books of the Torah. However, since the task turned out to be too time-consuming for one person, Mendelssohn decided to engage other collaborators.<sup>398</sup> It seems that it was Dubno’s perfectionism and meticulousness, and not his lack of competence, that prevented him from writing a commentary on the whole of the Pentateuch, forcing Mendelssohn to step in and ask Wessely to join the undertaking.<sup>399</sup>

Dubno composed the bulk of the commentary on the Book of Genesis, Exodus 1, and Numbers 23-24, which appeared in *Alim li-terufah*.<sup>400</sup> The commentary on the first pericope of Genesis had been penned by Mendelssohn, probably as a model for Dubno to follow in his own work.<sup>401</sup> The commentary on Exodus, with the exception of chapter 1, was produced by Mendelssohn with

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<sup>397</sup> Letter to Avigdor Levi, GSJ, vol. 19, 252; *Or la-netivah*: GSJ, vol. 14, 244.

”ועוד תנאי אחד התניתי עמו שישתף את אחי הרבני מוהר”ר שאול נ”י במלאכת הדפוס והגהה הנכונה, וחלק כחלק יקחו שכר עמלם (...).”

<sup>398</sup> See quote from Mendelssohn’s introduction on pages 142-143. Also: *Or la-netivah*: GSJ, vol. 14, 247: “And I understood that our teacher Rabbi Solomon Dubno was overburdened with work, and you could not be left alone.”

”ואני מאז בינתי שתכבד העבודה על מהר”שד הנ”ל, ולא יוכל שאתה לבדה.”

Albert van der Heide suggests that the Biur was meant to be a joint work by Dubno and Mendelssohn, with the former responsible for collecting the relevant material and the latter for redaction and overall supervision of the project. While Mendelssohn assisted in the composition of all the commentaries, his work on Exodus reflects his idea of how such a work should look like. Albert van der Heide, “The *Be’ur* in Progress: Salt and Spices at a Medieval Banquet” in: Fontaine (ed.), *Sepharad in Ashkenaz*, 141.

<sup>399</sup> See: Mendelssohn’s account of Dubno’s commitment to the project in *Or la-netivah*, GSJ, vol. 14, 245; Dubno’s description of his work in a letter to Mendelssohn of September 22, 1780 in: GSJ, vol. 19, 258-261.

<sup>400</sup> Weinberg, GSJ, vol. 15.1, xxix.

<sup>401</sup> *Ibid.* cxxv-cxxvi, n. 90.

Dubno's assistance.<sup>402</sup> Naphtali Herz Wessely composed the commentary on the Book of Leviticus and, after Dubno abandoned the project, Aaron Jaroslav of Galicia was asked to provide the commentary on the Book of Numbers,<sup>403</sup> while Herz Homberg of Bohemia<sup>404</sup> produced the commentary on the translation of Deuteronomy.<sup>405</sup> The Masoretic notes for the first two books were written by Dubno, and for the remaining three volumes by Shalom of Mezerich.<sup>406</sup> Thus the publication must be recognised as the fruit of the combined labour of a group of

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<sup>402</sup> See Mendelssohn's remark in *Or la-netivah*: *ibid.* 246 - "And I, the writer, composed the commentary on the whole book of Exodus from the beginning to the very end, except for a few places marked in brackets which were taken from our teacher Rabbi Solomon Dubno, as mentioned earlier, and he alone wrote the *tikun soferim* for this book."

"ובספר שמות חברתי אני הכותב את כל הבאור כלו מראש ועד סוף, לבד ממקומות המוסגרים שבאו בהם מדברי מהר"שד הנ"ל, והוא לבדו חבר את תקון סופרים גם על הספר ההוא."

A manuscript of anonymous notes on the commentary to Exodus, together with Mendelssohn's response to them, is stored at the National Library of Israel, Schwadron Collection, Solomon Dubno, Schwad 01 04 24, no. 2. The document was reproduced in GSJ, vol. 19, letter no. 238, 261-273 as part of a letter from Hartog Leo. However, Altmann identified the manuscript as Dubno's commentaries on Mendelssohn's notes on the Book of Exodus. See: Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn*, 406-409. Haim Borodianski and David Sorkin ascribe the commentaries to Hartog Leo. See: GSJ, vol. 19, letter 238, 261, and David Sorkin, *Moses Mendelssohn and the Religious Enlightenment*, 54. Similarly, Peretz Sandler believed that Dubno had copied the commentaries from someone else. See: Sandler, *Ha-be'ur la-Torah*, 84 f., n. 29. On Hartog Leo, see: Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn*, 181, 184-188.

<sup>403</sup> About Aaron Jaroslav see: Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn*, 359-360.

<sup>404</sup> For an analysis of Herz Homberg's life and his educational activity see: Dirk Sadowski, *Haskala und Lebenswelt: Herz Homberg und die jüdischen deutschen Schulen in Galizien 1782-1806* (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010); Majer Bałaban, *Herz Homberg i szkoły Józefińskie dla Żydów w Galicyi: (1787-1806); Studium historyczne* (Lwów: Kadimah, 1906), 9-23; Rachel Manekin, "Herz Homberg: The Individual and the Image" (in Heb.), *Zion* 71.2 (2006), 153-202; Louise Hecht, "The Clash of Maskilim in Prague in the Early 19th Century: Herz Homberg versus Peter Beer", *Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies* (1997), 165-174.

<sup>405</sup> Neither of them were mentioned by name in the introduction to *Or la-netivah*, where they are referred to as "allies and scholars, who have a sound reputation in Torah and in wisdom (*hokhmah*, which Altmann [*Moses Mendelssohn*, 360] reads as "secular wisdom") but out of modesty they did not let me reveal their names" (GSJ, vol. 14, 247). See also: Altman, *Moses Mendelssohn*, 359-360.

"(...) בעלי בריתי, מביני מדע, אשר להם יד ושם בתורה ובחכמה, אלא שמרוב ענוה לא הרשוני לגלות את שמם."

<sup>406</sup> GSJ, vol. 14, 247.

German and Eastern-European Jews, although some scholars prefer to regard all the commentaries as chiefly Mendelssohn's work.<sup>407</sup>

As the product of five different authors, the *Biur* as a whole lacked consistency of both form and content. The commentary focused on the linguistic aspect of the biblical text in order to prove that Hebrew was as sophisticated as the German language.<sup>408</sup> However, each of the commentators employed his own methods and expressed different views from those of his coworkers.<sup>409</sup> In comparison to the commentaries written by others, Dubno's work on the Book of Genesis, as well as on excerpts of Exodus and Numbers, reflects a strong focus on grammatical questions.<sup>410</sup> According to the approbation of the rabbinical court of Berlin, he consulted Mendelssohn whenever he hesitated between the opinions of different authorities. As we learn from *Alim li-terufah*, Mendelssohn had asked Dubno to compose a commentary that would draw on books authored by eminent grammarians, such as *Masoret seyag la-Torah* by Meir ben Todros ha-Levi Abulafia (1180-1244), *Or Torah* by Menahem Lonzano (d. 1608) and *Minḥat shai* by Jedidiah Norzi (1560 – 1626).<sup>411</sup> In addition, Dubno mentions four other authorities, whose works would be used in his composition: Rashi (1040 – 1105), Samuel ben Meir (1085-1174), Abraham ibn Ezra (1089–1167) and Nahmanides (1194–1270). By contrast, he expresses criticism of *Mikhlah yofi* by

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<sup>407</sup> Raphael Jospe, "Moses Mendelssohn: A Medieval Modernist" in: Fontaine, Schatz, Zwiep (eds), *Sepharad in Ashkenaz*, 118.

<sup>408</sup> Edward Breuer, *In defense of tradition: The Masoretic text and its rabbinic interpretation in the early German Haskalah* (PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 1990), 126.

<sup>409</sup> Weinberg, GSJ, vol. 15.1, xxix.

<sup>410</sup> For comparison of Dubno and Mendelssohn's commentaries, see pages 147-152.

<sup>411</sup> GSJ, vol. 14, 329. In private communication Irene Zwiep pointed out that the authors evoked by Mendelssohn deal with the Masorah and textual tradition rather than with grammar per se, which might suggest that Mendelssohn perceived Dubno's work as of textual, rather than grammatical nature. See page 132.

Solomon ben Levi, which he considers to be a plagiarism of David Kimhi's *Sefer shorashim*. He also referred to kabbalistic works, such as the Zohar, *Sefer yetsirah*, Isaac Luria's *Sefer ha-kavanot*, as well as philosophical works, including Yehudah ha-Levi's *Sefer ha-Kuzari* and Saadia Gaon's *Emunot ve-deot*, and works on grammar by David Kimhi, Eliyahu (Levita) Bachur and Solomon Hanau. In comparison to Mendelssohn, he had much more expertise knowledge in grammar and Masoretic punctuation. Mendelssohn himself stated that all the grammatical notes were authored by Dubno and other scholars, as he did not have the required knowledge.<sup>412</sup> For that reason, Werner and Wanzel believe that Dubno must be the author of all the grammatical remarks in Mendelssohn's part of the commentary.<sup>413</sup>

Although the extant notes on Mendelssohn's commentary to the Book of Exodus<sup>414</sup> were ascribed by Borodiansky to Hartog Leo,<sup>415</sup> both Sandler and Altmann have recognised Dubno's handwriting in the manuscript, as well as his highly respectful style of addressing Mendelssohn.<sup>416</sup> The notes can therefore be rightly attributed to Dubno, and they provide further insights into the nature of his collaboration with Mendelssohn. It seems that when Mendelssohn was composing his commentary on the Book of Exodus, he relied on Dubno's expertise regarding more technical subjects, like for example the priestly garments (Exodus 28), consecration of priests (Exodus 29:7) and instructions for

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<sup>412</sup> See page 34.

<sup>413</sup> Werner Weinberg, Rainer Wenzel, "Welche Teile des Biur können Mendelssohn zugeschrieben werden?," G SJ, Vol. 9.4, lxxi-lxxii.

<sup>414</sup> G SJ, vol. 19, letter no. 238, 261-273.

<sup>415</sup> See n. 402.

<sup>416</sup> Sandler, *Ha-be'ur la-Torah*, 84-85, 84, n. 29; Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn*, 406. In his letters (eg. letter no. 204 or 237) Dubno usually addresses Mendelssohn as "my Lord" (*adoni*) and "your Highness" (*ma'altekhah*). The same or similar forms appear in the remarks on the Exodus commentary (*adoni, rum ma'alto, ma'alto*).

building the tabernacle (Exodus 26, 27). It appears that Mendelssohn selectively accepted Dubno's suggestions, marked by the insertion of the bracketed and asterisked expression "Solomon said" – a device frequently employed throughout the commentary to the Book of Exodus.<sup>417</sup> It seems that Mendelssohn tended to consult Dubno on the more difficult Hebrew phrases in Scripture, and that Dubno would respond with his own suggestions, based on a review of Talmudic literature.

Dubno's conscientious and meticulous application to his work is well evident in these remarks. He would consult several sources before expressing his opinion on any question regarding the translation and would allow himself to rectify parts of the text where in his opinion Mendelssohn had made a mistake. Mendelssohn evidently accepted some of Dubno's suggestions,<sup>418</sup> but remained unconvinced by others, as, for example, when Dubno corrected Mendelssohn's transcription of the Greek letter Ξ from "ksi" to "gsi."<sup>419</sup> However, he agreed with Dubno's opinion that Nachmanides was wrong in rejecting Rashi's commentary regarding priestly garments.<sup>420</sup> Dubno's remarks were inserted in 145 places in Mendelssohn's commentary of the Book of Exodus, which suggests that Mendelssohn must have closely cooperated with Dubno while composing this work. The whole first chapter of the Book of Exodus was inserted in brackets,

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<sup>417</sup> Compare: GSJ, vol. 19, 264 and Exodus 28:17 in: GSJ, vol. 16, 284.

<sup>418</sup> See for example Mendelssohn's responses on sheet 5, page two of the manuscript: "You are right. I deleted the text" (הדין עמו, ומחקתי את הדבור ההוא) or "Indeed, there is no evidence" (אכן אין ראיה).

<sup>419</sup> GSJ, vol. 19, letter no. 238, 268 (in manuscript: sheet 5, page 2).

Mendelssohn was right to ignore his comment, as the letter Ξ is indeed pronounced "ksi". Roger D. Woodard, *The Ancient Languages of Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 15.

<sup>420</sup> GSJ, Vol. 19, 266.

which suggests that it was composed by Dubno, who also printed it in his *Alim li-terufah*. However, the comparison with the prospectus reveals that the version published in *Sefer netivot ha-shalom* was shortened and edited. For example, Mendelssohn replaced the verb “he’etak”, used by Dubno, with “tirgem”. While both of them mean “to translate”, the former also denotes copying or transmission.<sup>421</sup>

Whenever possible, Dubno made use of his knowledge of geography and history to enrich the commentary with additional facts. For example, to Mendelssohn’s statement that Mount Sinai was named after *ha-sneh* (a [burning] bush), he added the remark that allegedly, according to “explorers of the land” (*tare ha-arets*) one can find on the mountain stones which, if broken to pieces, would reveal lines in a shape of a bush.<sup>422</sup> He also describes Egyptian mummies<sup>423</sup> and hieroglyphs, which had not yet been deciphered at that time.<sup>424</sup> Dubno believed that it was crucial to complement one’s knowledge of Scripture with “traditional narrative literature” (*sifrut sipurit mekubebet*), such as *Sefer ha-yashar* (Venice: 1625), which Dubno believed to be an ancient work summarising biblical history from the creation of the first people to the conquest of the land of Canaan.<sup>425</sup> He also refers to *Sefer yuhasin*<sup>426</sup> and the Zohar.<sup>427</sup> It seems that Dubno draws his knowledge exclusively from Jewish, often outdated, sources.

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<sup>421</sup> Ibid. lxxvii-lxxxii.

<sup>422</sup> GSJ, vol. 16, 22, Exodus 3:2.

While Dubno does not name his sources, this story appears for example in: Jacob Emden, *Birat migdal oz* (Zhitomir: 1874), 240.

<sup>423</sup> GSJ, vol. 15.2, 592, Genesis 50:2.

<sup>424</sup> Ibid. 470, Genesis 41:8.

Jean-François Champollion published his decipherment of the Rosetta Stone in 1822.

<sup>425</sup> GSJ, vol. 16, 36, Exodus 4:20; vol. 15.2, 89, Genesis 10:15.

<sup>426</sup> For example: GSJ, vol. 15.2, 90, Genesis 10:16 or Genesis 10:18.

<sup>427</sup> For example: ibid. 85, Genesis 10:5.

He mentions that following the opinion of Joseph Kimhi, the land of Kush can be identified with Ethiopia or,<sup>428</sup> according to Josef ben Gorion (the alleged author of *Sefer Yosippon*) with a territory that is “adjacent to India” and named Al-Ḥabash.<sup>429</sup> The latter is also evoked as a reference when Dubno associates Gomer with France<sup>430</sup> and Riphath with Great Britain or England.<sup>431</sup> Following *Sefer yuḥasin*, he identifies the land of the Girkashites with Georgia.<sup>432</sup> Dubno also evokes notable historical figures such as Alexander the Great,<sup>433</sup> as well as Socrates and Plato, about whom he knows from reading an unnamed work by Menahem Recanati (1250-1310).<sup>434</sup> Wishing to correct a common mistake, he explains that one should not confuse Onkelos, the author of the Aramaic translation of the Pentateuch, with Aquila of Sinope, a non-Jewish author from Asia Minor who translated the Hebrew Bible into Greek (he does not identify his source of information on this subject).<sup>435</sup>

While Mendelssohn’s commentary was partly inspired by Christian textual criticism, such as Baumgarten’s *Metaphysica* and Robert Lowth’s *Lectures on the*

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<sup>428</sup> Joseph Kimhi mentions the land of Kush in *Sefer ha-berit* (Jerusalem: the Bialik Institute, 1974), 52, 54. However, he does not refer to it as to Ethiopia.

<sup>429</sup> GSJ, vol. 15, 85, Genesis 10:6.

<sup>430</sup> Ibid. 83, Genesis 10:2. See: *Sefer Yosippon* (Venice: 1544), 5.

<sup>431</sup> Ibid. 81, Genesis 8:27 and 84, Genesis 10:3. See: *Sefer Yosippon* (Venice: 1544), 5.

<sup>432</sup> Ibid. 90, Genesis 10:16.

<sup>433</sup> Ibid. 82, Genesis 8:27. Dubno does not evoke any references, while mentioning Alexander the Great. Alexander’s life has been described in sources that were available to Dubno such as *Sefer Yosippon* (chapters 5-13, 32-33) and Talmud (Tamid, 31b-32a). Wout Jac. van Bekkum, “Medieval Hebrew Versions of the Alexander Romance” in Andries Welkenhuysen, Herman Braet, Werner Verbeke (eds), *Mediaeval Antiquity* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1995), 295-297; idem, “Alexander the Great in Medieval Hebrew Literature”, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 49 (1986), 218-226.

<sup>434</sup> GSJ, vol. 15, 85, Genesis 10:5.

<sup>435</sup> Ibid. 502-503, Genesis 43:14.

*Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*,<sup>436</sup> Dubno's work is based exclusively on Jewish sources. Nevertheless, both of them based their commentaries primarily on Jewish textual tradition, selecting opinions of those scholars whom they deemed the most correct. Both Mendelssohn and Dubno focused on the *peshat* reading of the Scripture, in which Dubno's scribal emendations determined the interpretation of the Hebrew text, as reflected in the German translation.<sup>437</sup> Both commentaries were to a great extent based on the analysis of Masoretic punctuation. Even if Dubno was the only author of the content related to grammar, Mendelssohn must have recognised its importance, since, otherwise, he would not have included grammatical clarifications in his commentary on the Book of Exodus. Consequently, the comparison of commentaries by Mendelssohn and Dubno does not reveal any particular discrepancies or frictions between them, as it seems to have been the case with the content of the introduction to *Sefer netivot ha-shalom*.

According to *Or la-netivah*, Mendelssohn carried out at least some of the work which had originally been assigned to Dubno, for example the composition of an Old French glossary to Rashi's commentary. Nevertheless, Mendelssohn seemed to be very pleased with Dubno's dedication to the work:

"The above-mentioned Rabbi Solomon Dubno has fulfilled his task conscientiously. What those [other] writers had already done was not enough for him; rather, he studied the books to perfection and made

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<sup>436</sup> Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn*, 409.

<sup>437</sup> Breuer, *The Limits of Enlightenment*, 178.



extraordinary efforts [to ensure] that nothing incorrect would come out of his pen.”<sup>438</sup>

Dubno composed yet another addendum to Mendelssohn’s translation – his *Tikun soferim*, a work dedicated to the Masoretic notes on the books of Genesis and Exodus. Due to its length, only excerpts from this work were incorporated in *Sefer netivot ha-shalom*, but even after his withdrawal from the Biur project, Dubno continued to write it covering the remaining three books of the Torah, and he published the complete work in Vienna in 1793. As he states at the beginning of the book, his decision to publish it was prompted by public demand, and in fact, the book became one of Dubno’s most well known publications. Its purpose was to rectify the mistakes that were pervasive in the printed editions of the Hebrew Bible at that time<sup>439</sup> — a general trend of early modern European Bible scholarship, which was striving to cleanse the Scripture of all grammatical corruptions.<sup>440</sup> Notably, however, throughout his *Tikun soferim* Dubno makes no reference at all to the textual criticism undertaken by Christian Bible scholars. In his own scribal emendations Dubno relied on the works of both Ashkenazi and Sephardic scholars. The scope of his sources extends from the first medieval works on the subject of scribal emendation to the newest research published during his lifetime. *Tikun soferim* thus consists of a compilation of vast scholarly materials and, therefore, could serve as a useful tool to anyone interested in this particular field of Hebrew grammar. It conforms to accepted Jewish views of the Masorah, and traces all the corruptions of Scripture to printing

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<sup>438</sup> GSJ, vol. 14, 245.

<sup>439</sup> Breuer, *The Limits of Enlightenment*, 34.

<sup>440</sup> *Ibid.* 27.

errors in the published editions rather than to any mistakes in ancient manuscripts. In contrast to other grammarians, such as Menahem Meiri or Meir Abulafia, who believed that it was impossible to determine the correct pronunciation of the text,<sup>441</sup> both Dubno and Mendelssohn hoped that meticulous research would make it possible to restore the Scripture to their original, correctly vocalised form.<sup>442</sup>

In *Birkat Yosef* Dubno enumerates some of the sources he consulted for the composition of *Tikun soferim*, such as: *Masoret seyag la-Torah* by Meir Abulafia (Florence: 1750), *Minḥat Kohen* by Yosef Shneuer ha-Cohen (Kuru Tsheshme: 1598), *Or Torah* by Menahem Lonzano (Amsterdam: 1659), *Minḥat shai* by Jedidiah Solomon Norzi (Mantua: 1742-1744), *Mikhtav me-Eliyahu* by Elijah ibn Hayim (Constantinople: 1624), *Em la-masoret* by David Viterbi (Mantua: 1748-1749), *Sefer Seder Avraham* by Abraham Abele ben Jeremiah (Frankfurt an der Oder: 1752), *Sefer bet Avraham* by Abraham ben Reuben (Constantinople: 1742), *Mevin ḥidot*, a commentary on the Masorah by Joseph Heilbronn (Amsterdam: 1765), *Seyag la-Torah* by Asher Anshel Worms (Frankfurt am Main: 1766), *Divre emet* by Isaac Premislau of Prague (unidentified), a booklet of decisions [*kuntres ha-hakhra'ot*] by Raphael Ḥayyim Basila,<sup>443</sup> *Sefer Masoret ha-masoret* by Eliyahu (Levita) Bachur (Venice: 1538), *Perush al ha-masorah* by Ya'akov ben Isaac of Sandomierz (Amsterdam: 1702),

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<sup>441</sup> Barry Levy, "The State and Directions of Orthodox Bible Study" in: Shalom Carmy (ed.), *Modern Scholarship in the Study of Torah: Contributions and Limitations* (Rowman & Littlefield, 1996), 67-68.

<sup>442</sup> *Alim li-terufah*, GSJ, vol. 14, 329; Breuer, *In defense of tradition*, 127.

<sup>443</sup> Dubno might refer here to Basila's commentary to Norzi's *Minḥat shai*. Ibid. 88, n. 50.

*Sefer shemen Sasson* by Yosef Sasson, *Kiryat sefer* by Menahem Meiri (1306), and *Et sofer* by David Kimhi.<sup>444</sup>

The use of *Masoret seyag la-Torah*, *Or Torah*, and *Minḥat shai* is also evoked by Mendelssohn in *Or la-netivah*, where he explains how crucial these works were in the composition of Dubno's *Tikun soferim*:

“For they examined, investigated, and attended to every word in order to make known whether [its spelling] is deficient or complete, whether each letter is strong or weak, and whether each cantillation mark falls on a word's penultimate or final syllable. [They also discussed] large and small letters, upright and inverted letters, *metagim* and *ga'ayot*,<sup>445</sup> and open and closed sections of the Torah. Moreover, on the basis of manuscripts that came into their possession, they corrected the mistakes that have appeared in the printed version of the Masorah, since one should not rely on the printed versions of the Masorah on account of the great number of errors present in them. Who can recount the abundant good that these authors have done for us with their books? Were it not for them, the Torah would have been almost forgotten among Israel, scribes would not know how to properly write [even] one pericope of the Torah, and the reader would not know how to properly read [even] one verse. For differences among printed books have become numerous, and errors in them are exceedingly common.”<sup>446</sup>

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<sup>444</sup> Kamenetsky, “Haskamot,” *Yeshurun* 10, 767.

<sup>445</sup> *Meteg* (also called *ga'ayah*) - a punctuation mark in the shape of a vertical bar, used for stress marking.

<sup>446</sup> *Alim li-terufah*, GSJ, vol. 14, 329. Translation from: Gottlieb (ed.), *Moses Mendelssohn: Writings on Judaism, Christianity, & the Bible*, 200-201.

Indeed, Dubno profited in his work from the most advanced Jewish Masorah research available in his day. Lonzano, for example, was famous for consulting old manuscripts of the Pentateuch and the *midrashim*, which he procured in Jerusalem, Aleppo, Damascus and elsewhere. However, while his *Or Torah* was devoted to the Pentateuch alone, Norzi's *Minḥat shai* not only exhibited a similar level of excellence, but it also included corrections to the whole text of the Hebrew Bible. Like Lonzano, Norzi made use of Sephardic manuscripts and regarded Masoretic notes as a point of reference to which, in a later edition, Basila added his own notes together with a list of 900 variants.<sup>447</sup> Besides using rare manuscripts, both Lonzano and Norzi acknowledged that their grammatical treatises were greatly influenced by the most important Masoretic works of their days, *Shemen Sason* and *Kiryat Sefer*.<sup>448</sup> Both *Minḥat shai* and *Or Torah* became the basis for the manuscript copies of Torah scrolls in Sephardic and Ashkenazic communities.<sup>449</sup>

While the above-mentioned works belonged to the undisputed Masoretic canon of that time, the work of Eliyahu (Levita) Bachur contradicted the beliefs of most Jewish grammarians by claiming that the Masoretic punctuation originated during the post-Talmudic period rather than in the time of Ezra or at Mount Sinai.<sup>450</sup> For example, Asher Anshel Worms (1695-1769), a physician and a

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<sup>447</sup> "Norzi, Jedidiah Solomon Raphael ben Abraham", *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 15, 313.

<sup>448</sup> Yosef Ofer, "Methods and Sources of Yedidya Shelomo Norzi in his Treatise *Minḥat Shay*", *Textus* 24 (2009), 304-306.

<sup>449</sup> Jordan S. Penkower, "The Development of the Masoretic Bible" in: Adele Berlin, Marc Zvi Brettler (eds), *The Jewish Study Bible* (Oxford University Press, 2014), 2083.

<sup>450</sup> Page H. Kelley; Daniel S. Mynatt; Timothy G. Crawford, *The Masorah of Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia: Introduction and Annotated Glossary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan; Cambridge: Eerdmans Publishing, 1998), 25.

*maskil*, regarded the Masoretes as mere transcribers who corrected all the mistakes in punctuation which, in his opinion, had been made since the introduction of the cantillation system in the days of Ezra.<sup>451</sup> However, Bachur's *Masoret ha-masoret* had a major impact on Christian Bible scholars,<sup>452</sup> one of whom, Christian Semler, even dedicated to none other than Mendelssohn himself his own German translation of Bachur's book.<sup>453</sup> Despite the controversy surrounding this work, Dubno apparently decided to use it, as he recognised that Bachur's contribution to Masorah research was of great value, even though neither he nor Mendelssohn could agree with his stance.<sup>454</sup>

While Mendelssohn never expressed any criticism of Dubno's commentary, his remark about Wessely's work, which appeared in his letter to Herder dated September 1781, is far from complimentary: "You will receive the third book of Moses with a commentary by my learned friend, Mr. Wessely, which, doing me harm and causing many readers to be bored, turned out to be too scholarly."<sup>455</sup>

The two remaining contributors to the publication were referred to as "helpers", since Mendelssohn was obliged to compose substantial parts of their

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<sup>451</sup> Edward Breuer, "Jewish Study of the Bible Before and During the Jewish Enlightenment" in: Magne Sæbø (ed.), *Hebrew Bible / Old Testament. The History of Its Interpretation*, vol. 2, *From the Renaissance to the Enlightenment* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 1009-1010.

<sup>452</sup> Stephen G. Burnett, *From Christian Hebraism to Jewish Studies: Johannes Buxtorf (1564-1629) and Hebrew Learning in the Seventeenth Century* (Leiden; New York; Köln: BRILL, 1996), 205-206.

<sup>453</sup> Elijah Levita, Salomon Semler (ed.), *Uebersetzung des Buchs Massoreth Hammassoreth* (Halle: C.H. Hemmerde, 1772).

<sup>454</sup> *Or la-netivah*, GSJ, vol. 14, 213; GSJ, vol. 9.1, 8.

<sup>455</sup> Meyer Kayserling, *Moses Mendelssohn: sein Leben und seine Werke* (Leipzig: Hermann Mendelssohn, 1862), 549.

"Das dritte Buch Moses mit meiner Uebersetzung und einem Commentar von meinem gelehrten Freunde Herrn Wessely, der zu meinem Schaden und zu maches Lesers Langeweile viel zu gelehrt gerathen ist."

commentaries.<sup>456</sup> His correspondence with Homberg reveals the latter's indecisiveness and lack of enthusiasm for the project. Mendelssohn suggested to him on June 20, 1782, that he should write the commentary on the Book of Deuteronomy, emphasizing that it would require little effort, as Mendelssohn himself had already written or was about to finish the commentaries on the pericopes *Devarim* (1,1–3,22), *Nitsavim va-yelekh* (29,9-31,30), *Ha'azinu* (32,1–52), *Va'etkhanan* (3,23–7,11), *Vezot habrakhah* (33,1–34,12).<sup>457</sup> This proposal was followed by Mendelssohn's letters of July 1, 1782 and July 16, 1782, in which he promised Homberg an honorarium and beseeched him to give him a clear, definitive answer.<sup>458</sup> Nevertheless, Homberg's work turned out to be unsatisfactory, and Mendelssohn was forced to rewrite it to a great extent ("As you will see, I dealt freely with your commentary. However, I hope, that you will be glad."<sup>459</sup>).

### **The authorship of *Alim li-terufah***

It is not entirely clear whether Dubno was the only, the main, or just a secondary author of *Alim li-terufah* (Amsterdam, 1778).<sup>460</sup> In this prospectus, Mendelssohn is mentioned in the third person, and the whole text is written from the perspective of Dubno, who states that Mendelssohn had asked him to write

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<sup>456</sup> GSJ, vol. 15.1, il.

<sup>457</sup> GSJ, vol. 20.2, letter no. 255, 423-424.

<sup>458</sup> Ibid. letter no. 256, 424-426; letter no. 258, 427-428.

<sup>459</sup> *Moses Mendelssohn's Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 5, 662: "Mit Ihrem Commentar bin ich, wie Sie sehen werden, ziemlich frei umgegangen; ich hoffe aber, Sie sollen damit zufrieden seyn."

<sup>460</sup> See: Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn*, 369; Weinberg, "Language Questions", 239; Kamenetsky, "Haskamot (...)", *Yeshurun* 8, 733-4, n. 41; and Breuer, *The Limits of Enlightenment*, 234-235, n. 26.

a commentary on the German Pentateuch, in which he would explain why the translator had opted for a particular mode of rendering the Hebrew text. In Altmann's opinion, Mendelssohn was the main author of the prospectus, but he had asked Dubno, whose own role was limited to refining the style, to appear as its only author in order to deflect any criticism that might be directed at the project by members of the Jewish public.<sup>461</sup> Edward Breuer, on the other hand, suggests that since several passages from *Alim li-terufah* are repeated verbatim in Mendelssohn's preface to the Biur, the prospectus may well have been the fruit of genuine collaboration between the two scholars.<sup>462</sup> David Kamenetsky attributes the prospectus to Dubno,<sup>463</sup> while Dubno himself claims authorship of *Alim li-terufah* in his commentary on Genesis.<sup>464</sup>

Haim Borodiansky<sup>465</sup> and Alexander Altmann<sup>466</sup> predicate their assumption that Mendelssohn was the author on a letter by Joseph, Moses Mendelssohn's son, dated April 4, 1841 and addressed to Heiman Jolowicz,<sup>467</sup> in

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<sup>461</sup> Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn*, 376.

<sup>462</sup> Breuer, *The Limits of Enlightenment*, 234-235, n. 26.

<sup>463</sup> Kamenetsky, "Haskamot (...)", *Yeshurun* 8, 733-4, n. 41;

<sup>464</sup> See: GSJ vol. 15.2, 216 and 422, Genesis 23:1 - "And I have already written about it at length in the pamphlet *Alim li-terufah* which has already been published" ("וכבר יצא לאור "הארכתי בזה בקונטרס עלים לתרופה אשר כבר יצא לאור"), and Genesis 37:2 - "As I wrote in the introduction to the pamphlet *Alim li-terufah* which has already been published" ("כאשר כתבתי בהקדמת הקונטרס עלים לתרופה שנדפס כבר").

<sup>465</sup> GSJ, vol. 14, viii.

<sup>466</sup> Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn*, 820, n. 52.

<sup>467</sup> The letter is stored at the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People, Jerusalem, personal file of Heymann Jolowicz, no. P42/5. According to Joseph Mendelssohn, Dubno did not tutor him but rather his elder brother, who had died in childhood. If, as Jolowicz claims, Dubno tutored Mendelssohn's only son, then he must have performed this task before 1770, the year of Joseph, the second son's birth. But this assumption is untenable, as Dubno did not move to Berlin until 1772. Most probably, Joseph had simply forgotten that he had been taught by Dubno in his early childhood. In a letter dated April 4, 1841, he claims to remember Dubno very well, relating that when he was about 8-10 years of age, his father used to discuss with Dubno the introduction to the Pentateuch and other matters. Moreover, Dubno himself mentions teaching

which, in their opinion, Mendelssohn's authorship is stated. However, Werner Weiberg dismisses Borodiansky's opinion, arguing that Joseph Mendelssohn was referring in his correspondence not to *Alim li-terufah* but to *Or la-netivah*.<sup>468</sup> Indeed, in his letter to Jolowicz, Joseph<sup>469</sup> writes: "(...) one cannot ascribe the introduction (sic!) to Solomon Dubno any more than one can ascribe to a stone carver the production of a piece of art which he made after a master's model."<sup>470</sup> Sandler likewise thinks that Mendelssohn did not edit *Alim li-terufah*, which allowed Dubno to write at length on the subject of grammar.<sup>471</sup>

The same topics are discussed in both *Alim li-terufah* and *Or la-netivah*, and in certain cases Mendelssohn copies entire passages from the former into the latter.<sup>472</sup> However, all these copied excerpts have clearly undergone some editorial revision, which points to Mendelssohn's critical approach to the text of *Alim li-terufah*. Andrea Schatz suggests that a comparative analysis of the depiction of Christians in the two compositions respectively makes it possible to distinguish between the different political views of Dubno and Mendelssohn.<sup>473</sup>

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Joseph in a letter to Mendelssohn dated September 22, 1780, as well as in a record of his income.

<sup>468</sup> GSJ, vol. 15, 1, cxix, n. 35.

<sup>469</sup> In contrast to his siblings, Joseph, a successful banker, did not renounce his Jewish faith and engaged in the promotion of his father's intellectual achievements by composing his biography. Wilhelm Treue, "Das Bankhaus Mendelssohn als Beispiel einer Privatbank im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert," *Mendelssohn-Studien* 1 (1972), 32-39; Joseph Mendelssohn, "Moses Mendelssohn's Lebensgeschichte" in: Georg Benjamin Mendelssohn (ed.), *Moses Mendelssohn's gesammelte Schriften* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1843-45), vol. 1, 3-56.

<sup>470</sup> "(...) man diese Einleitung so wenig dem Solomon Dubno zuschreiben kann als man dem Steinhauer ein Kunstwerk zuschreibt welches er nach dem Modell des Meisters anfertigt."

The Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People, Jerusalem, personal file of Heymann Jolowicz, no. P42/5, letter dated April 4, 1841.

<sup>471</sup> Sandler, *Ha-be'ur la-Torah*, 21.

<sup>472</sup> Compare: GSJ, vol. 14, 247 and 330; 325 and 232.

<sup>473</sup> Andrea Schatz, "Zur Pentateuch-Ausgabe," GSJ, vol. 20.1, lxvi.



While both of them denounce the practice of Gentile biblicalists of changing the original text, Dubno's stance is more critical and it lacks the spirit of religious tolerance espoused by Mendelssohn, who does not hesitate to refer in his introduction to Christian scholars such as Johann Gottfried Eichhorn (1752 - 1827), a practice that would certainly be disapproved of by the rabbinical elite.<sup>474</sup> In comparison, Dubno's *Alim li-terufah* promotes a more traditional worldview and it sharply accentuates the difference between Jews and Gentiles who are presented in an unambiguously negative way, as they are accused of distorting the true meaning of Scripture to serve their own purposes:<sup>475</sup>

“They [Jewish children] supply themselves with the works of the Gentiles [literally: “They please themselves in the brood of aliens” (Isa. 2:6)], using the translations of non-Jewish scholars who disdain the trusted interpretations of our sages of blessed memory and who refuse to accept their unblemished tradition, while interpreting Scripture according to their own fancy and spoiling the vineyard of the Lord of hosts.”<sup>476</sup>

Similarly to Dubno, Mendelssohn criticises Christian scholars for introducing changes into the biblical text. However, he also justifies this practice by claiming that Gentiles use the Scripture for a different purpose. He states that, unlike the Jews, the Christians perceive the Bible as a chronicle and read the

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<sup>474</sup> GSJ, vol. 15.1, lv; Johann Gottfried Eichhorn, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (Leipzig: 1780–1783).

<sup>475</sup> GSJ, vol. 20.1, lxi-lxii

<sup>476</sup> GSJ, vol. 14, 327, translation from Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn*, 374-375.

Pentateuch in order to learn history. Consequently, their practice of changing certain words and vowels is not harmful.<sup>477</sup>

“Since the Christian translators neither possess the rabbinic tradition, nor heed the words of the Masorah, nor even accept the vowels and accents that we possess, they treat the words of the Torah as a broken wall, before which each individual rises and which each individual treats as he desires. They add to, subtract from, and alter the Eternal’s Torah, [changing] not only the vowels and accents, but sometimes even the letters and words (for who will restrain them?), according to their fancies and comprehension. By means of this, they sometimes read what occurs to their own minds, rather than what is written in the Torah.

I do not condemn these scholars for this, for what compels them to heed the tradition that they have not received from their ancestors, or the Masorah that has not been transmitted to them by individuals whom they deem trustworthy? Furthermore, they do not accept the words of the Torah in order to observe and perform all that is written there, but rather as a book of chronicles, to know the events of ancient times and to understand the ways of divine providence and governance in every generation. For these purposes, it does no harm if they sometimes alter details by adding or subtracting letters or words, just as they do with famous, well-known

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<sup>477</sup> Andrea Schatz, “Zur Pentateuch-Ausgabe,” GJSJ, vol. 20.1, lxix.

secular books (*sifre ḥol*), which every editor changes according to his wishes.”<sup>478</sup>

Mendelssohn’s more tolerant stance towards Christians might partly stem from the fact that he embraced the idea of a natural religion, which implied that ethical truths and knowledge of God could be discovered by means of reason, and without any need for positive (based on revelation) religion.<sup>479</sup> This belief was manifested in Judaism for example through the existence of the seven Noahide laws,<sup>480</sup> which were meant to enable Gentiles to lead a moral existence. Mendelssohn’s presentation of Judaism as a religion that was both natural and revealed was an attempt to defend it against the deist criticism of positive religions, expressed, for example, by Hermann Samuel Reimarus in his *Apologie oder Schutzschrift für die vernünftigen Verehrer Gottes*. In Mendelssohn’s view, Judaism could be viewed as a natural religion, as it was rational and universal, that is, it regarded all mankind as capable of attaining felicity and the knowledge of eternal truths. While it was also a revealed, historical religion, its particularistic commandments and laws served the purpose of protecting the universal truths against distortion such as idolatry.<sup>481</sup> Therefore, Mendelssohn could be tolerant of Christians perceiving the Hebrew Bible as a chronicle, because the fact they regarded Judaism as a historical phenomenon did not deny its truthfulness as a

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<sup>478</sup> GSJ, vol. 14, 246. Translation taken from: Michah Gottlieb (ed.), *Moses Mendelssohn: Writings on Judaism, Christianity, & the Bible* (Waltham, Mass.: Brandeis University Press, 2011), 196.

<sup>479</sup> Sorkin, *Moses Mendelssohn and the Religious Enlightenment*, 6-7, 27-28.

<sup>480</sup> Moses Mendelssohn, Johann Kaspar Lavater, *Briefe von Herrn Moses Mendelssohn und Joh. Caspar Lavater* (Berlin: 1770), 21-22.

<sup>481</sup> Haim Mahlev, “Mendelssohn’s Concept of Natural Religion Re-Examined”, *Journal of Jewish Thought & Philosophy* 25 (2017), 209-231.

natural religion. Dubno, being a Jew with a traditional worldview, could not share this opinion, as he considered Judaism to be the only correct religion, and the correct text of the Hebrew Bible to be the only version of the Scripture that could convey the real meaning of the text and under no circumstances could it be regarded as a part of historical heritage that was devoid of religious meaning. In addition, in contrast to Dubno, who probably intended *Sefer netivot ha-shalom* exclusively for Jewish readers, Mendelssohn might have had the potential Christian readers in mind too when he composed his introduction, and, for that reason, he decided to express his views in line with the Enlightenment thought.<sup>482</sup>

The comparison between the printed pages of Dubno's introduction and *Or la-netivah* reveals that Mendelssohn had readapted both the structure of Dubno's essay and some of his ideas (e.g. his description of the four elements of the Hebrew language), endowing them with a different interpretation.<sup>483</sup> Both texts elaborate on the history of Jewish Pentateuch translations and express criticism of contemporary Bibles in Yiddish. Some passages in Mendelssohn's introduction are repeated verbatim in his letter to Avigdor Levi of June 29, 1779, in which he describes Dubno as a researcher and full author of the commentary,<sup>484</sup> while in *Or la-netivah* he stresses his own contribution to the work, which consisted not only of assisting but also of actually "putting words in Dubno's mouth."<sup>485</sup>

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<sup>482</sup> Compare page 142.

<sup>483</sup> GSJ, vol. 20.1, lxxii-lxxiii, n. 12.

<sup>484</sup> GSJ, vol. 19, 251-252.

<sup>485</sup> GSJ, vol. 14, 246, line 18.

While Dubno claims in *Alim li-terufah* that he was asked to compose the commentary as well as *Tikun soferim*,<sup>486</sup> Mendelssohn states that publication of the latter work was suggested by Dubno himself.<sup>487</sup> Furthermore, Weinberg notes that in Mendelssohn's letter, as well as in his introduction, the role of his brother, Saul, is presented as being of great significance. Saul is said to have been responsible for proofreading and correcting the text, for which he was to be paid the same salary as Dubno. By contrast, in Dubno's *Alim li-terufah* Saul is mentioned only briefly at the end of the prospectus.<sup>488</sup>

While Andrea Schatz is convinced that Dubno was indeed the author of *Alim li-terufah*, she expresses uncertainty as to whether Dubno or Mendelssohn should be credited with the overarching line of argument and structure of the work.<sup>489</sup> Weinberg, too, believes that the ornate Hebrew style of the prospectus points to Dubno's authorship.<sup>490</sup> Moreover, a comparison of the language of the prospectus with other works by Dubno seems to confirm the assumption that he was indeed the author of *Alim li-terufah*; for example, the same expression, referring to Dubno's habit of working on the commentary days and nights, appears in both the prospectus and in Dubno's *Birkat Yosef*.<sup>491</sup>

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<sup>486</sup> Ibid. 329.

<sup>487</sup> "To this Dubno added also his work *Tikun soferim*." Weinberg, GSJ, vol. 15.1, xxxii.

<sup>488</sup> GSJ, vol. 15.1, xxxi.

<sup>489</sup> GSJ, vol. 20.1, lxxiii

<sup>490</sup> GSJ, vol. 15.1, xx.

<sup>491</sup> Kamenetsky, "Haskamot," *Yeshurun* 10, 767.

## The Biur and the Jewish tradition of the biblical textual criticism

The publication of *Biur* inscribes itself into a long tradition of Jewish textual scholarship, in which the Hebrew Scripture was considered a reliable version of the ancient text. The presence of *Tikun soferim* in *Sefer netivot ha-shalom* constitutes a critical evaluation of contemporary Pentateuch editions that were abundant in errors. The unshakable belief of the authors of the *Biur* in the authenticity of the Scripture, combined with their awareness of incongruences between its different texts, formed a part of the Jewish textual criticism which dated from the rabbinical period. While the canonisation of the Hebrew Bible occurred in the second or third century, it was not until the eighth century that the text of Scripture was standardised by the Masoretes. In order to reconcile discrepancies appearing in different versions, they introduced a distinction between *kere* (the way a word should be pronounced) and *ketiv* (its traditional written form). The Masoretic text was considered reliable by most scholars in the centuries to come. An exception was a Spanish grammarian Jonah ibn Janah (985-1040), who doubted its authority due to a plethora of alternative examples of orthography and pronunciation, and claimed that the discrepancies would never be resolved and, thus, a correct text could not be achieved. This view was shared later by David Kimhi (1160–1235) and Profiat Durian (fifteenth century). By contrast, a number of scholars, such as Jacob ibn Adoniah (c. 1470 – before 1538) and Eliyahu (Levita) Bachur (c. 1468-1549) believed that these incongruences made part of the original text and had a hidden meaning. Starting

from the sixteenth century, this seems to be the prevalent view in the Jewish textual criticism.<sup>492</sup>

Meir ha-Levi Abulafia (d. 1244) made an attempt to correct the existing text of the Scripture in conformity with the Masoretic rules. His aim was not to reconstruct the original text but to, first of all, to make directions for determining which liturgical Torah readings were acceptable according to the halakhah. The introduction of print contributed to burgeoning of the Jewish textual criticism. Menahem Lonzano (1550-1624) and Yedidyah Norzi (1560-1616) pointed to several discrepancies between the existing versions of the Scripture and expressed an opinion that the text should be corrected. Just as the authors of *Sefer netivot ha-shalom*, they believed that a pristine version of the Pentateuch could be achieved through scholarly analysis and comparison of available editions and manuscripts. They focused primarily on the matters of orthography and accentuation, which did not have much influence on the interpretation of the Hebrew Bible, in order to establish, just as Abulafia, which Torah scrolls fulfilled the halakhic requirements. By contrast, Moses Isserles (1530-1572) and Ezekiel Landau doubted if a perfectly reliable version of the Scripture could ever be restored.<sup>493</sup>

The authenticity of the Masoretic punctuation was questioned by Eliyahu Bachur. In his *Masoret ha-masoret*, he asserted that the Masoretic vocalisation was introduced in the post-Talmudic period, and so was not an original part of the Pentateuch, even though it still transmitted an authentic pronunciation of the Scripture. However, his opinion was not shared by other Jewish scholars of his

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<sup>492</sup> Breuer, *The Limits of the Enlightenment*, 33-45.

<sup>493</sup> *Ibid.*

time and was rejected also in *Sefer netivot ha-shalom*. For example, Azariah da Rossi (c. 1511-c.1578) argued that the system of punctuation was lost twice and subsequently recovered, with the Masoretes restoring it the second time.<sup>494</sup>

Until mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, Jewish scholars did not engage into a direct polemic with Christians over the correctness of the Masoretic punctuation. In the early modern times, a number of German Jews who were exposed to the local, Gentile culture, became interested in biblical criticism. In 1766, Asher Anshel Worms published his *Seyag la-Torah*, in which he took a defensive stance against the accusations of the unreliability of the Masorah, and in 1783. *Ha-Me'asef*, a maskilic journal, was established with the aim of popularisation of Hebrew and biblical exegesis, as well as German literature. In contrast to previous Jewish publications, it combined traditional Jewish scholarship with the newest developments in textual criticism. *Sefer netivot ha-shalom* marked another milestone in the Jewish textual tradition, as it constituted not only the first Jewish Pentateuch translation into German but also the first Pentateuch translation that was fully in accordance with the Masoretic text. In line with the ideas of the Jewish Enlightenment, in their defence of Masoretic text, the authors of the *Biur* evoked the ideas of rational thought and meticulous scholarship rather than merely an adherence to their religious beliefs.<sup>495</sup>

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<sup>494</sup> Ibid.; idem, "Jewish Study of the Bible Before and During the Jewish Enlightenment", 1009-1010.

<sup>495</sup> Breuer, *The Limits of the Enlightenment*, 111-113, 124-129, 177; idem, "Jewish Study of the Bible Before and During the Jewish Enlightenment", 1009-1010.



## The Biur as a debate with Christianity

Dubno's denunciation of the changes to Scripture introduced by Christian Bible scholars belongs in a longer tradition of defending the Hebrew scribal emendations against the attacks of early modern scholars. In addition to its purpose of spreading command of the German language, the new German Pentateuch edition amounted to an apology for the Masorah in light of Christian textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible. Even though Dubno's *Tikun soferim* was unintelligible to the average Jewish reader, it comprised a useful tool for vindicating the Masoretic vowel points in the face of Christian biblical scholarship.<sup>496</sup>

The fact that the Hebrew Bible was being studied by both Jews and Christians enabled Jewish scholars to take part in the Enlightenment debate surrounding biblical criticism. Christian Bible scholarship was often distinguished by textual criticism that disputed the authenticity of the Masoretic tradition and challenged the veracity of Jewish interpretations of Scripture.<sup>497</sup>

Christian interest in study of the Hebrew Bible and its Masoretic system intensified during the sixteenth century.<sup>498</sup> Catholic scholars challenged the textual authority of the Tanakh while defending the accuracy of the Latin Vulgate, whereas Protestant scholars made use of the Hebrew text to dispute the Catholic

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<sup>496</sup> Breuer, *The Limits of the Enlightenment*, 174.

<sup>497</sup> Ibid. 17, 20-22.

<sup>498</sup> Roland H. Bainton, "The Bible in the Reformation" in: S. L. Greenslade (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the Bible: The West from the Reformation to the Present Day* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 1-37; Marie-Luce Demonet-Launay, "La désacralisation de l'hébreu au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle" in: Ilana Zinguer (ed.), *L'Hébreu au temps de la Renaissance* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 154-171.

tradition. This discourse was fuelled by the publication of the Samaritan Pentateuch, procured by Pietro della Valle in Damascus in 1616, as some scholars considered it more reliable than the text of the Hebrew Torah.<sup>499</sup> For example, Charles François Houbigant (1686-1783) argued that the Masoretic text did not reflect the pronunciation of Hebrew at the times of Ezra, and claimed to have corrected its “faulty” Hebrew.<sup>500</sup> Benjamin Kennicott (1718-1783) published, between 1776 and 1780, his critical Hebrew Bible edition,<sup>501</sup> in which he juxtaposed different versions of the text assembled from manuscripts found in a number of libraries in Western Europe and the Middle East, hoping, in this way, to restore the authentic words of Scripture.<sup>502</sup>

Johann David Michaelis (1680-1764) introduced textual criticism into the field of enlightened biblical studies by amending the Masoretic punctuation,<sup>503</sup> and adding his own commentaries to his German translation of the Old Testament.<sup>504</sup> Similarly, Johann Gottfried Herder (1752-1827) included emendations in his translation of the Hebrew text in *Vom Geist der ebräischen*

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<sup>499</sup> Robert Pfeiffer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (London: A. & C. Black, 1948), 99-100.

<sup>500</sup> Charles François Houbigant, *Racines hébraïques sans points-voyelles: ou, dictionnaire hébraïque par racines* (Paris: Claude Simon et Barthelemy Alix, 1732), xxxvi-lxv.; idem, *Biblia Hebraica, cum Notis Criticis et Versione Latina* [Hebrew Bible, with Critical Notes and a Latin Version] (Paris: 1743-1754).

<sup>501</sup> Benjamin Kennicott, *Vetus Testamentum Hebraicum cum Variis Lectionibus* (Georg Olms Verlag: 2003).

<sup>502</sup> William McKane, “Benjamin Kennicott: An Eighteenth-Century Researcher” in: *Journal of Theological Studies* 28.2 (1977), 445-464; Ruderman, *Jewish Enlightenment in an English Key*, 23-56.

<sup>503</sup> Anna-Ruth Löwenbrück, “Johann David Michaelis et les débuts de la critique biblique” in: *Le Siècle des Lumières et la Bible* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1986), 113-128.

<sup>504</sup> Johann David Michaelis, *Deutsche Übersetzung des Alten Testaments mit Anmerkungen für Ungelehrte* (Göttingen: 1769-1785).

*Poesie*.<sup>505</sup> Among Jewish scholars, Eliyahu Bakhur (1469-1549) had asserted in his *Masoret ha-masoret*,<sup>506</sup> that the Masoretic vocalisation was created in the post-Talmudic period.<sup>507</sup> However, he still believed that the vowel points conveyed a reliable pronunciation of Scripture.

The grammatical part of Mendelssohn's and Dubno's joint enterprise was aimed first of all at challenging the prevalent stance of Christian Bible scholars by affirming the correctness of the Hebrew Scriptures on the premise that the Masoretic points had constituted an integral part of the revelation at Mount Sinai.<sup>508</sup> Indirectly, this could serve as proof of the reliability of the Jewish interpretation of Scripture and a defence against Christian textual criticism. Furthermore, it could protect the Hebrew Bible from the attempts to invest it with Christological allusions. But despite all these differences in intention, both Christian scholars and the editors of *Sefer netivot ha-shalom* shared the common goal of the creating a faultless text of the Pentateuch.

### **The reaction to the publication of the Biur**

Mendelssohn felt that because the translation of the Pentateuch into German was a radical innovation, the commentary had to be based on the writings of recognised medieval rabbinic authorities. His hope for Jewish

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<sup>505</sup> Johann Gottfried Herder, *Vom Geist der ebräischen Poesie: eine Anleitung für die Liebhaber derselben, und der ältesten Geschichte des menschlichen Geistes* (Dessau: 1782-1783).

<sup>506</sup> Eliyahu Bakhur, *Masoret ha-masoret* [Tradition of the Masorah] (Venice: 1538).

<sup>507</sup> Judith Olszowy-Schlanger, "The Science of Language among Medieval Jews" in: Gad Freudenthal (ed.), *Science in Medieval Jewish Cultures* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), 403.

<sup>508</sup> GSJ, vol.15.1, 22, 25.

acculturation rested on the belief that it could be achieved through both, study of the Bible and the popularisation of the German language among the Jews living in German-speaking lands.<sup>509</sup> Until the publication of *Sefer netivot ha-shalom*, faulty Yiddish and Christian Bible translations were used in the Jewish schools (*heder*, pl. *hadarim*). Many parents found the level of instruction unsatisfactory, and those who could afford it, including Mendelssohn, preferred to employ private tutors rather than to send their children to a school run by Polish teachers.<sup>510</sup>

In the approbations to *Sefer netivot ha-shalom*, authored by the rabbi of Berlin, Zevi Hirsch Levin, his son, Saul Berlin, *av bet din*<sup>511</sup> of Frankfurt an der Oder and the rabbinical court of Berlin, Dubno is described as a renowned scholar and grammarian, and the importance of the publication, including Dubno's *Tikun soferim*, is fully recognised. These rabbinic approbations echo the references, already made in *Alim li-terufah*, to the linguistic perfection of the Hebrew language and the confounding of speeches at Babel. It is clear that just like Mendelssohn and Dubno, the authors of the approbations viewed the project as an attempt to revive Torah study rather than to abandon study of Hebrew in favour of German.<sup>512</sup> Rabbi Zvi Hirsch praises Dubno's work, thanks to which, as he states, the Pentateuch translation is not just "an empty word" but can be clarified and revised by means of the commentary. Similarly, Saul Berlin stresses that it is essential for the biblical text to be absolutely correct if proper understanding of

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<sup>509</sup> Ibid. xxi-xxii.

<sup>510</sup> Ibid. xxvi-xxvii.

The majority of *yeshivot* at that time were located in Eastern Europe and their graduates often migrated westwards, where there was a shortage of tutors with traditional, religious education. For that reason, most *melameds* in German lands were Jews of Polish origins. See the introductory chapter for a discussion of this subject.

<sup>511</sup> A supreme justice of a religious court.

<sup>512</sup> GSJ, vol. 20.1, lxxv

religious law is to be achieved. Furthermore, in his *haskamah*, as well as in his poem, *Mahalal re'a* [Praise of a Friend] Naphtali Hirsch Wessely applauds both Mendelssohn and Dubno.

All the rabbinical approbations for *Sefer netivot ha-shalom* were written in autumn 1778, shortly before the publication of Dubno's prospectus, *Alim li-terufah*.<sup>513</sup> However, they were not included either in the edition of *Alim li-terufah*, which was published a little later in 1778, or in the first volume of the Pentateuch translation, published in the spring of 1780. Only in the second volume, published in 1781, did the approbations finally appear in print. One of the possible explanations for this is that Dubno had sent them to Mendelssohn only in September 1780.<sup>514</sup> On May 25, 1779 Mendelssohn wrote a response to a letter from Avigdor Levi, which is missing.<sup>515</sup> Judging from Mendelssohn's words, Avigdor Levi must have been puzzled by the decision not to include in *Alim li-terufah* a rabbinical approbation from Ezekiel Landau:

"I hasten to answer you regarding your astonishment at the fact that I did not ask the eminent Rabbi, Head of the local rabbinical court, may God keep him in life and health, for permission to print the Pentateuch, so that I would not seem to you [Avigdor Levi] as an erring man who is too hasty in his actions, or who swaggers before the greatest and most illustrious of

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<sup>513</sup> Weinberg, "Language Questions", 228, n. 136; Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn*, 379; See dates of the approbations in GSJ, vol. 20.1, 315, 321, 324.

<sup>514</sup> GSJ, vol. 20.1, lxxiv, n. 118; lxxiv.

<sup>515</sup> GSJ, vol. 19, 251-253.

the land, and I will tell you exactly what the circumstances were (Ketubot 104b).”<sup>516</sup>

In his letter, Mendelssohn wrote that in his view, *Sefer netivot ha-shalom* did not require any approbations as it did not transmit anything new but consisted only of the Hebrew text in translation and a commentary based on rabbinical literature. According to him, Dubno himself was of the same opinion, presenting his commentary as a mere summary of works by renowned rabbinical scholars of the past. Mendelssohn stressed that he did not expect to gain any profit from the publication of *Sefer netivot ha-shalom*, and that, moreover, the translation, which was intended for young children and youths, was composed in Judeo-German. He therefore did not deem it necessary to seek Landau’s approbation for such a work, although if he were to publish something in Hebrew, he would certainly ask for it. He further explained that he solicited approbations for the publication of *Sefer netivot ha-shalom* from the local Berlin rabbis only in order to comply with custom. He admitted that Dubno also had written to Landau to seek his advice on a certain scholarly question, with which Landau had dealt in his work, the *Noda’ bi-Yehudah*:

“Even our teacher and Rabbi, the above-mentioned Solomon Dubno, the author of the *Biur* and *Tikun soferim*, did not at first ask the sages of our generation for an approbation of his work, because most of his

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<sup>516</sup> Ibid. 251.

“ואמהר להשיב לו על דבר פליאתו הפלא ופלא, על אשר לא שאלתי מאת הרב הגאון אב”ד דשם, השם יחייהו ויאשרהו, להסכים בהדפסת חמשה חומשי תורה, למען לא אהיה בעיניו כאיש שוגה ונמהר במעשיו, או במתכבד נגד גדולי ארץ אנשי שם, ואימי לך איזי גופא דעובדא היכי הוי.”

commentaries had been drawn from the greatest interpreters [of the past], such as Rashi [Shlomo Yitzhaki], Ramban [Nachmanides], Raba [Abraham ibn Ezra], Rashbam [Samuel ben Meir] and Radak [David Kimhi], and he did not deviate from their methods either to the right or to the left, except for a handful of places which even a child could count. And he [Dubno] in his naivety did not ask for an approbation from anyone except for the eminent rabbi and head of the rabbinical court of our community, may God protect it, which is in accordance with the custom of not printing any books, either old or new, without the approbation of our rabbi. However, he [Dubno] did write to the eminent head of the rabbinical court [Ezekiel Landau] of your community [in Prague], may God protect it, only to him, in order to ask him a question regarding the inverted *nuns*<sup>517</sup> in the Torah, because we saw that in his [Landau's] book, *Noda' bi-Yehudah*, he thoroughly analysed this subject. And in his *Tikun soferim* Rabbi Solomon Dubno quoted the words of the above-mentioned sage as a halakhic ruling. However, he still had some doubt and decided to ask the Rabbi [Landau] about it (...).<sup>518</sup>

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<sup>517</sup> Inverted *nun* - a mirror image of the Hebrew letter *nun* whose function is uncertain, which appears nine times in the Hebrew Bible.

<sup>518</sup> Ibid. 252-253.

"והנה אף הרב מוהר"שד הנ"ל כותב הביאור ותקון סופרים, לא בקש מתחלה הסכמה מחכמי הדור על חבורו, כי על הרוב לקט את ביאוריו מגדולי המפרשים והמה רש"י רמב"ן וראב"ע ורשב"ם ורד"ק, ולא נטה מעל דרכיהם ימין ושמאל, כי אם במקומות מעטים, ונער יכתבם, והוא בתמו הלך ולא בקש הסכמה כי אם מאת הרב הגאון אב"ד דקהלתנו יע"א, כמנהג שלא להדפיס שום ספר לא ישן ולא חדש, כי אם על פי הסכמת הרב המורה, ואולם אל הגאון אב"ד דקהלתכם יע"א, אליו לבד שם דברתו, ולשאול ממנו שאלה אחת בנידון נונין ההפוכין שבתורה, כי ראינו בספרו נודע ביהודה ששם אל לבו לחקור בענין הזה היטב, ורש"ד הנ"ל הביא בת"ס שלו את דברי הגאון הנ"ל לפסק הלכה. ואולם נשאר לו עדיין, בהם מקום ספק, ונשאו לבו לשאל את פי הרב על הדבר ההוא (...)."

Following this passage, Mendelssohn explained that Dubno sent a letter with his enquiry to Landau, but, due to the War of the Bavarian Succession,<sup>519</sup> delivery of the letter was delayed, and Mendelssohn still hoped that Landau would eventually respond to Dubno's request for help.<sup>520</sup>

In his letter to Avigdor Levi of 25 May 1779, Mendelssohn refers to the fact that the rabbinical elite disapproved of Dubno's *Alim li-terufah*.<sup>521</sup> Indeed, a number of rabbis were critical of the whole enterprise. For example, Ezekiel Landau observed that the German translation contained vocabulary which was too difficult for the average Jewish child to understand. As a result, he felt, tutors would be forced to concentrate on explanations of the German text instead of expanding on the meaning of Scripture itself.<sup>522</sup> He therefore refused to provide an approbation for the Biur, while granting one for a Yiddish Pentateuch translation penned by Sussman Glogau, which could be easily understood by all.<sup>523</sup> Landau's decision to grant his approbation for a Yiddish Bible edition was met with fierce criticism by the Berlin circle of maskilim, who denounced it in *ha-Me'asef*:

“Perhaps when you [the reader] see it [the *haskamah*] with your own inquiring eye, you would think, as we thought, that a Pentateuch translation written in a foreign tongue [German] would be considered a

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<sup>519</sup> The war lasted from July 1778 to May 21, 1779.

<sup>520</sup> Mendelssohn's claim that he and Dubno did not ask for Landau's approbation does not agree with the account of the latter. In his *haskamah* for Dubno's Pentateuch edition, Landau states that Dubno did ask him for his approbation for *Sefer netivot ha-shalom*, but Landau refused it because he disapproved of Mendelssohn's German translation of the Pentateuch. See pages 174-176.

<sup>521</sup> GSJ, vol. 19, 251-252.

<sup>522</sup> Ibid. 209; Weinberg, "Language Questions."

<sup>523</sup> *Ha-Me'asef* (1786), 143.



slight and insignificant thing by a Torah sage such as him [Landau]. But he did not waste even one moment before granting his approval of this, one of the most meagre of study aids; he went through the words of the translator and provided them with his *haskamah*, writing whatever came to his mind on first impression. Consequently, the eminent rabbi himself is free from blame, while all errors would be his student's."<sup>524</sup>

Pinhas ha-Levi Horowitz of Frankfurt was even more negative than Landau in his view of Mendelssohn's publication, dismissing it as 'nonsense'.<sup>525</sup> A particularly severe criticism was voiced by Rabbi Raphael Cohen of the triple community of Altona, Wandsbek and Hamburg. According to a newspaper announcement, he intended to put the work under a ban.<sup>526</sup> Mendelssohn responded to this attack by asking August Hennings, the Danish State Councillor, to help his cause by enlisting the support of the King of Denmark, Christian VII (1756-1808), and his Royal Library, urging them to subscribe to *Sefer netivot ha-shalom*. The official approval of the Danish monarch would have effectively prevented Cohen from banning it, as Altona was under Danish rule at that time.

While the reservations of some of the rabbis were expressed in undiplomatic and, at times, aggressive terms, it seems that Mendelssohn and his fellow-Prussian maskilim were insensitive to the fear of assimilation so poignantly

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<sup>524</sup> Ibid. 142.

ואולי בראותך אותה בעין חוקר תחבוש לבך כמו שחשבנו אנחנו, וזה: כי להיות תרגום החומש בלשון עם זר דבר קטן וקל בעיני חכם תורניי כמותו, לא בטל עליו אפילו רגע אחת ונתן רשות לאחד מהפחותים שבנושאי כליו לעבור על דברי המתרגם ולכתוב הסכמה על שמו. והוא כתב מה שעלה על רוחו בהשקפה ראשונה. וא"כ הרב הגאון נקי, והשגיאה על תלמידו.

<sup>525</sup> Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn*, 486.

<sup>526</sup> The article appeared in *Hamburger Correspondenten*, no. 114, July 17, 1779. After: Feiner, *The Jewish Enlightenment*, 395, n. 67.

expressed by some members of the traditional rabbinical elite, whose concerns were not unfounded, given the wave of baptisms (*Taufepidemie*) that was soon to sweep through German Jewry.<sup>527</sup> Werner Weinberg dismissed the notion that *Sefer netivot ha-shalom* was an attempt to encourage Jewish assimilation, pointing out that the work's main purpose was to facilitate understanding of the Pentateuch, and to serve the young as a religious-educational tool. While the translation might have contributed to the integration of German Jews in Gentile society, this was not its main aim, and the proliferation of German speakers of Jewish descent in German society was a corollary of a broader tendency rather than the product of a single publication. It seems that the translation was intended from the outset for Jewish pupils who were already native German speakers, rather than being a German textbook for Jews who lacked full command of the language.<sup>528</sup> Whatever Mendelssohn's intentions, despite the criticism voiced by the most respected religious authorities of the time, many Jews, including rabbis, approved of the new Pentateuch translation, of which in total 750 copies were sold to both Jewish and non-Jewish readers.<sup>529</sup>

Mendelssohn's German Pentateuch received a great deal of attention from contemporary Christian Bible scholars as well. In fact, according to Eliyahu Stern,<sup>530</sup> the *Biur* was never intended exclusively for Jewish readers; the views which Mendelssohn expressed in this work corresponded to the stance he took in those of his writings that were directed specifically at a non-Jewish readership. Stern supports this claim by evoking the publication of an edition of the *Biur* in

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<sup>527</sup> Lowenstein, *The Berlin Jewish Community*, 120-133.

<sup>528</sup> Weinberg, "Language Questions", 197-242.

<sup>529</sup> Lowenstein, *The Readership of Mendelssohn's Bible Translation*, 180.

<sup>530</sup> Stern, *The Genius*, 67-68.

the Latin script, which appeared soon after the Hebrew script edition, in 1780, and the translation of *Alim li-terufah* into German.<sup>531</sup> While the title of the German script edition, *Die fünf Bücher Mose, zum Gebrauch der jüdischdeutschen Nation*, states clearly that it was aimed at German Jews who could not read the Hebrew script of the Judeo-German edition,<sup>532</sup> 21 subscribers to *Sefer netivot ha-shalom* were Gentiles.<sup>533</sup> Even if Stern might have exaggerated in his claim that Christians were the main target of the Biur, Mendelssohn was certainly aware that some non-Jews would buy his Pentateuch translation and, perhaps, it was one of the reasons for not expressing harsh criticism of Christian Bible editions.<sup>534</sup> Furthermore, since he described his undertaking as “the first step to culture”,<sup>535</sup> it seems probable that he wanted the publication to serve as a way of promoting the image of an enlightened Jewish readership among the non-Jewish population.

While Christian reviews of the Biur were positive overall, many were not entirely pleased with certain aspects of the publication. For example, the Lutheran Orientalist Oluf Gerhard Tychsen, a professor at the universities of Bützow and Rostock,<sup>536</sup> stated in his *Mendelssohns “Probe einer deutschen Übersetzung der 5 Bücher Mose”* that the language of the translation was too sophisticated to be understood by Jewish readers, and that the text was devoid

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<sup>531</sup> Christian Gottlieb Mayer (trans.), *Probe einer jüdisch-deutschen Übersetzung der fünf Bücher Moses von Herrn Moses Mendelssohn* (Göttingen, 1780).

<sup>532</sup> Josias Friedrich Löffler (ed.), *Die fünf Bücher Mose, zum Gebrauch der jüdischdeutschen Nation* (Berlin: Nicolai, 1780).

<sup>533</sup> Lowenstein, “The Readership of Mendelssohn’s Bible Translation”, 183.

<sup>534</sup> Compare pp. 161-164.

<sup>535</sup> See n. 384.

<sup>536</sup> Weinberg, “Language Questions”, 206, n. 38.

of all Christological allusions.<sup>537</sup> He also criticised Dubno for not mentioning some of the Bible translations that were studied by Christian scholars, e.g. the Septuagint, in his introductory summary of the history of biblical translation.<sup>538</sup> However, he found particularly useful those excerpts from *Tikun soferim* that were included in *Sefer netivot ha-shalom*. His approval of Dubno's scribal emendations should be viewed in the context of his religious beliefs: while entertaining missionary intentions towards the Jews, whom he blamed for the desacralisation of Christian holidays, and while supporting the ban on early burial for the Jewish community of Mecklenburg-Schwerin,<sup>539</sup> he was also a fierce opponent of textual criticism as practised by the biblical scholars of his age.<sup>540</sup>

By contrast, Christian Gottlob Meyer, a Jewish convert to Christianity and the German translator of *Alim li-terufah*, scorned Dubno for concentrating on the grammatical aspects of the translation, which would be understood only by a minority of Jews, instead of writing a commentary that would benefit a wider audience. For the same reason, he decided not to translate *Tikun soferim* at all.<sup>541</sup>

Depending on the reviewer, the criticism of the language employed by Mendelssohn ranged from the accusation that the German vocabulary was far too sophisticated, to condemnation of the excessive use of words deriving from Hebrew. For example, Johann Bernhard Köhler, a professor of Oriental languages in Kiel, Göttingen and Königsberg, and Josias Friedrich Christian

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<sup>537</sup> Tychsen, Mendelssohn's "Probe einer deutschen Übersetzung der 5 Bücher Mose", 275, 287.

<sup>538</sup> Ibid. 286.

<sup>539</sup> Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn*, 287-288.

<sup>540</sup> Oluf Gerhard Tychsen, *Tentamen de Variis Codicum Hebraicorum Vetus Testamenti Manuscriptorum Generibus, a Iudaeis et non-Iudaeis Descriptis* (Rostock: 1772).

<sup>541</sup> GSJ, vol. 20.1, 284.

Löffler, the transcriber of *Sefer netivot ha-shalom* into the Latin alphabet, generally praised Mendelssohn's German translation but faulted it for resorting to too great a number of "Hebraisms".<sup>542</sup> By contrast, the Protestant theologian Johann Christoph Döderlein criticised the German translation for being too refined for the average Jewish reader. He claimed that he had shown some excerpts from *Sefer netivot ha-shalom* to a few Jews who found the text too difficult to understand.<sup>543</sup>

### **Speculations regarding Dubno's withdrawal from the Biur project**

Sandler believes that it was Dubno's inability to express his ideas concisely which prompted Mendelssohn to re-write and abridge his work, and that this led to constant conflict between the two authors. In his opinion, while Mendelssohn did not reject Dubno's introduction in its entirety, he edited it extensively by removing the parts devoted to grammar.<sup>544</sup> This assumption seems to be correct, as in his letter to Mendelssohn, dated September 22, 1780, Dubno pleaded with Mendelssohn, in a tone that was both supplicatory and desperate, to publish his introduction in full:

"I send your Eminence my introduction, on which I have toiled until I completed it, labouring by the sweat of my brow. My eyes knew neither sleep nor rest. How many dinners had I not eaten and how many suppers

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<sup>542</sup> Löffler, "Die fünf Bücher Mose zum Gebrauch der jüdischdeutschen Nation", 227.

<sup>543</sup> Johann Christoph Döderlein, *Auserlesene theologische Bibliothek, darinnen von den wichtigsten theologischen in- und ausländischen Büchern und Schriften Nachricht gegeben wird* (Leipzig: Breitkopf, 1780), 158.

<sup>544</sup> Sandler, *Ha-be'ur la-Torah shel Moshe Mendelssohn*, 18-19, 25.

had I skipped, and on how many nights had I laboured until I completed my work! Now, like a hired hand, I am looking forward to my wage, hoping that you would accept my work willingly, graciously, with approval and generosity. Please forgive its length on this occasion, for I hope that it contains new insights, unknown to the present generation and even to several of the generation that preceded us. And may you keep the promise you made to me, your servant, before I ever started to write, when you said that while you wished to keep a close eye on the length of the commentary and *Tikun soferim*, you would pay no attention to [the length of] the introduction, because it would appear only once. Now it is fitting for a person like you to keep your promise? 'Has he said and shall he not do it? Or has he spoken and shall he not make it good?' (Numbers 23:19). For who like you would 'ride prosperously because of truth'? Who like you would gird himself with 'meekness and righteousness'? (after Psalms 45:5).<sup>545</sup>

In the same letter Dubno points out that he has invested more effort in the introduction than in either *Tikun soferim* or the commentary on the translation, having worked on it for ten whole weeks and studied more than 100 books. He

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<sup>545</sup> GSJ, vol. 19, 258.

הנה אנכי שולח לכבוד מעלתך את הקדמתך, אשר יגעתי ומצאתי, אשר עמלתי בה בזעת אפי, וביגיע כפי, לא נתתי שנה לעיני ותנומה לעפעפי, וכמה סעודות הצהרים בעבודה לא אכלתי, וסעודות הערב רבות בטלתי, וכמה לילות עמל מניתי לי, עד הגעתי לתשלום מפעלי, עתה כשכיר אקוה פעלי, כי תמשוך עלי חוט של חסד לקבלה באהבה, וברוח נדיבה, ובנפש חפצה, ואת פועל ידי תרצה, ושא נא אך הפעם את אריכות לשוני, כי אקוה שהגדתי בה חדשות, ונצורות לא ידעו הדור האחרון הזה, וגם איזה דורות שהיו לפנינו, ומוצא שפתיך תשמור ועשית, כאשר נדרת לעבדך טרם התחלתי לכתבה, באמרך כי אם הקפדת על הבאור והתקון סופרים על אריכות לשונם, לא תקפיד על ההקדמה, בעבור שלא באה רק פעם אחת, ועתה ראוי לאיש כמוך לקיים הבטחתך, ההוא אמר ולא יעשה ודבר ולא יקימנה? ומי זה לצלוח ולרכוב על דבר אמת כמוך? ומי הוא להגור כאזר ענוה צדק כמו אתה?

even asserts that if Mendelssohn were to publish the full text of the introduction (*lehadpis et ha-hakdamah kulah*),<sup>546</sup> he would be doing more for Dubno than his own parents had done, as they had given him life and brought him into this world, but Mendelssohn's approval would secure his fate in the after-life. It is clear that as far as Dubno was concerned, the religious significance of his work took precedence over its value as a means of gaining recognition and post-humous fame.

While Mendelssohn had apparently insisted on the brevity of both *Tikun soferim* and the commentary, he gave Dubno no directions regarding the length of the introduction. For this reason, in Dubno's opinion, he had no reason for rejecting it. The undertaking had, after all, been Dubno's full time occupation, and it demanded considerable investment of intellectual and physical effort. He even expressed his envy of Mendelssohn for the opportunity he enjoyed of engaging in mundane tasks through his employment in David Friedländer's silk factory, which provided him with some relief from his intense intellectual work. The hard labour that Dubno had put into the introduction, and the notion that it might all go to waste, triggered in him a major bout of depression. He neglected his health, kept away from his only son,<sup>547</sup> and although he had been tutoring Mendelssohn's son, Joseph, on every Friday, in his letter of Friday, September 22, 1780, he stated that his low spirit, coupled with a debilitating migraine, would prevent him from fulfilling his duty on that occasion. Moreover, since he knew that Mendelssohn, too, was prone to melancholy, he decided to avoid him altogether

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<sup>546</sup> Ibid. 259.

<sup>547</sup> We learn from a note published in *Der Orient* that Dubno's son, Abraham Moses, moved to Vilna after his father's death, where he tried to publish some of the manuscripts out of the inherited book collection. *Der Orient*, vol. 8, 178-179.

on that day in order not to further dishearten him, and advised him to spend more time with cheerful people, promising to visit him on the following Sabbath in order to lift his spirits by listening to Mendelssohn reading out excerpts from his translation of the Psalms. Although this letter was written in an obsequious and highly respectful style, it signalled the imminent breakdown of relations between Dubno and Mendelssohn.

In *Or la-netivah* Mendelssohn claimed that Dubno had failed to finish printing (*lehadpis*) his introduction (of which only the first four pages ever appeared in the German Pentateuch edition), because it proved to be financially unprofitable to him.<sup>548</sup> For Altmann, Mendelssohn's explanation betrayed nothing other than his desire to spare Dubno's feelings; he chose to ascribe Dubno's failure to complete the project to material considerations, thus avoiding all reference to the delicate issue of his own editorial decision not to publish Dubno's introduction in full.<sup>549</sup>

Weinberg, on the other hand, speculates that the first few pages of Dubno's introduction were published only as a result of Mendelssohn's oversight, without his knowledge or approval, and that by the time he discovered this error, it was too late to put it right.<sup>550</sup> To refute Altmann's claim whereby Mendelssohn knowingly chose to publish this short fragment of the introduction,<sup>551</sup> Weinberg

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<sup>548</sup> See: Mendelssohn, *Or la-netivah*, GSJ, vol. 14, 246 - "he started printing his introduction at the beginning of the book, but he did not complete it because, before it was finished, a different spirit took over him. I did not know what happened to him, and he left me and went to his land."

"וּבְרֵאשׁ הַסֵּפֶר הַתְּחִיל לְהַדְפִּיס הַקְּדָמָה שְׁלוֹ, אֲבָל לֹא גָמְרָהּ, כִּי טָרַם כְּלוֹתָהּ רוּחַ אַחֲרַת עֲבָרָה עָלָיו, לֹא יָדַעְתִּי מֶה הָיָה לוֹ, כִּי עֲזַבְנִי וְהֵלֵךְ לוֹ לְאַרְצוֹ."

<sup>549</sup> Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn*, 401.

<sup>550</sup> GSJ, vol. 15.1, xxxvi-vii

Dubno's cut introduction was published twice: first in the volume of Exodus in 1781, and then in the five-volume edition in 1783.

<sup>551</sup> Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn*, 401.



anchors his speculation in Mendelssohn's letter to Elise Reimarus, dated May 20, 1783, in which he expressed his wish to dispose altogether of Dubno's introduction.<sup>552</sup>

Another reason why Dubno decided to abandon the project might have been such disapproval of the German Pentateuch as was being voiced by the religious scholarly elite, who regarded it as a step towards assimilation and an inappropriate interpretation of the Torah. If that was indeed the reason for Dubno's withdrawal from his work on *Sefer netivot ha-shalom*, it might mean that Dubno did not identify himself with the radical followers of the Berlin Haskalah,<sup>553</sup> and he wished to remain within the boundaries of the early, religious Jewish Enlightenment, which meant aiming at the Hebrew renewal without challenging the views of the rabbinical elite or compromising on religious lifestyle. In fact, Mendelssohn also seems to suffer under the criticism of the rabbis. In a 1781 letter to Avigdor Levi, he blames Dubno for persuading him to publish the translation and thus involving him in an undertaking that was to cause so much discord in the Jewish community: "As soon as I allowed Rabbi Solomon Dubno to have my translation published, I lifted up mine eyes unto the hills (Ps. 121:1) and I gave my back to the smiters (Isaiah 50:6)."<sup>554</sup>

Barukh ha-Levi Epstein (1860–1941), a Lithuanian rabbi known for his biblical commentary, *Torah temimah*, claims that it was Rabbi Raphael Cohen of

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<sup>552</sup> "ein Exemplar erhalten habe oder bald [würde]. Die ganze vorrede ist dabei; und das Blatt welches beim zweiten Buch abgebrochen scheint, ist eigentlich Carton und [wird] ausgeschnitten." 13, 110. Weinberg, GSJ, vol. 15.1, xxxvii.

<sup>553</sup> Compare pp. 196-197.

<sup>554</sup> GSJ, vol. 19, letter no. 248, 279.

"זא באלד איך למוהר"ר שלמה נ"י איינגעווייליגט תרגום שלי דרוקן צו לאסן, שמתי את נפשי בכפי, נשאתי עיני אל ההרים, ונתתי את גוי למכים."

Hamburg who prompted Dubno's withdrawal from the project. According to the story reported by Epstein, Dubno had visited Hamburg before the Biur was condemned by the rabbis, in order to ask for Cohen's *haskamah*. To his complaining that "Mendelssohn is not pleasing to the sages of Israel,"<sup>555</sup> Cohen responded with: "One who is not pleasing to his fellow men is not pleasing to God" (Pirkei Avot 3:10),<sup>556</sup> which made a great impression on Dubno. Afterwards, Dubno allegedly asked if it was true that the name of every single Jew and every great event in history was alluded to in the Torah. Rabbi Cohen replied that even the nature of Mendelssohn's enterprise was hinted at in the Pentateuch, in the verse (Lev. 22:25) *mashḥatam bahem, mum bam* ("their corruption is in them, and blemishes be in them"), as the initial letters of the words comprising this verse point to Mendelssohn's name, Moshe ben Menahem Berlin – the form in which he allegedly signed his name in *Sefer netivot ha-shalom*.<sup>557</sup> Consequently, Dubno decided to abandon the project, saying "Blessed be the Lord who has placed me on this way"(Genesis 24:48) [that is, who gave me the opportunity of meeting Cohen].<sup>558</sup> However, one may doubt the reliability of this story, which has not been reported in any other source, and which seems to be anecdotal in character.

In addition to anecdotes of this type, whose authenticity cannot be verified one cannot exclude the possibility that some records may have been purposefully

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<sup>555</sup> Barukh ha-Levi Epstein, *Mekor Barukh* (Vilna: 1928), vol. 2, 1025.

"אין רוח חכמי ישראל נוחה מבן-מנחם."

<sup>556</sup> Ibid.

"כל שאין רוח הבריות נוחה ממנו (סימן הוא, כי) אין רוח המקום נוחה ממנו."

<sup>557</sup> The text probably refers to Mendelssohn's signature at the end of *Or la-netivah*, but even this does not exactly match the original, which reads: *Divre ha-tsa'ir Moshe ben rabbi Menahem Mendel sofer zikhrono le-haye ha-olam ha-ba*. See: GSJ, vol.14, 267. Mendelssohn was usually known by his coreligionists as "Moses of Dessau."

<sup>558</sup> Epstein, *Mekor Barukh*, 1026.

"ברוך ה' אשר הנחני בדרך זו."

falsified, as might be the case with Benjamin Hirsch Auerbach's publication in German translation of a manuscript Hebrew letter, dated June 2, 1789, written by Dubno to Wolf Heidenheim,<sup>559</sup> whom he must have got to know shortly before that date, that is, some three years after Mendelssohn's death at the beginning of 1786.<sup>560</sup> In Auerbach's translation, which is the only extant version of this letter, Dubno states that Naftali Herz, his former teacher, personally rebuked him for the part he had taken in the production of the *Biur* – a work he feared would undermine rabbinical tradition. This, Dubno claimed in the letter, was the reason why he subsequently decided to withdraw from the project, albeit without regretting the contribution he had already made, which he believed would be of benefit to the young.

Unfortunately, there are serious concerns regarding the authenticity of this letter. Naftali Herz, allegedly a former disciple of the Baal Shem Tov,<sup>561</sup> might well have objected to the new German Jewish translation of the Pentateuch, so long as he was actually aware of its existence. Altmann doubts Dubno's alleged meeting with his former teacher as reported in the letter, on the grounds that Naphtali Herz, who lived in Eastern Europe and died there in 1777, was unlikely to have met Dubno in Berlin at the time when the latter was first embarking on the *Biur* project. The time of Dubno's first involvement with the *Biur* may be surmised from his letter to Mendelssohn of September 22, 1780, where he complains that his salary for three, and according to another part of the same

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<sup>559</sup> Auerbach, *Geschichte der Israelitischen Gemeinde*, 179.

<sup>560</sup> Dubno writes in his *haskamah* to Heidenheim's *Mahzor* that they became acquainted twelve years earlier, in Frankfurt-am-Main. Since Heidenheim published his *Mahzor* in the years 1800-1802, they must have met roughly around 1788-1790.

<sup>561</sup> Bourel, *Moses Mendelssohn*, 41.

letter, four years of dedicated work on the project was long overdue.<sup>562</sup> This would mean that he must have embarked on the project in 1776 or 1777.<sup>563</sup>

In contrast to Graetz, who took Auerbach's German version to be entirely trustworthy,<sup>564</sup> Samet believes it to have been forged, though is unable to explain why.<sup>565</sup> He is inclined to attribute the falsification to Auerbach, who had been previously accused of similar acts, while still considering the possibility that the blame might lie either with Heidenheim, the apparent recipient of the letter, or even with Dubno himself, since the latter was suspected by a number of scholars of committing plagiarism by attributing to himself large excerpts from *Sipure Erets ha-Galil*, an account from a journey to Palestine by Simha ben Joshua Haas of Zloczow, Dubno's father-in-law.<sup>566</sup>

Auerbach, an Orthodox rabbi who preached only in German<sup>567</sup> and who had been accused of forging other Jewish manuscripts,<sup>568</sup> might have falsified Dubno's letter, or at least some parts of it, in order to promote the use of the German language in the Jewish community. Since Dubno was widely known for his piety and expertise in biblical exegesis, his endorsement of teaching the Torah in German would have served Auerbach as a stamp of approval for his own involvement in the campaign for Jewish emancipation. Similarly, Dubno's

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<sup>562</sup> GSJ, vol. 19, 258-261.

<sup>563</sup> GSJ, vol. 15.1, cxxx, n. 108.

<sup>564</sup> Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, vol. 11, 48.

<sup>565</sup> Samet, "Mendelssohn, Veisel ve-rabane doram," 235-236.

<sup>566</sup> The work was published under the title *Ahavat Tsiyon* (Grodno: 1789/1790).

Abraham Yaari, *Mase'ot Erets Yisra'el* (Tel Aviv: 1946), 383.

For more information on this publication, see the chapter on Dubno's belles-lettres.

<sup>567</sup> Isidore Singer, Gotthard Deutsch, "Auerbach, Benjamin Hirsch" in: *Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 2, 229-300.

<sup>568</sup> For the suspicion that Auerbach was responsible for another forgery, see: Shalom Albeck, *Kofer Eshkol* (Warsaw: Zipirah, 1911); Haym Soloveitchik, "Olam ke-minhago noheg, by Yishaq (Eric) Zimmer", *AJS Review* 23.2 (1998), 227-228.

strong disapproval of Hasidism, also apparently expressed in this letter, would have accorded with Auerbach's own agenda.

Even if we assume that Naphtali Herz did visit Prussia shortly before his death, there are other reasons for doubting his supposed meeting with Dubno at that time. According to Auerbach's version of the letter, Herz expressed his disapproval of Dubno's collaboration with Mendelssohn by saying: "Because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah, the Lord hath broken thy works" (2 Chronicles 20:37).<sup>569</sup> Since such a meeting must have taken place in 1776 or 1777 at the latest - a year or two prior to the publication of *Alim li-terufah*, it is surprising to learn that already then, Dubno should have attracted rabbinical censure. Herz's claim that he learned about the project, which was published only after his death, from "the rabbis of Prague and Hamburg"<sup>570</sup> may allude to Ezekiel Landau, the rabbi of Prague, but it is not compatible with Mendelssohn's testimony. To the effect that Landau was informed of it by Dubno in a letter he received only after the end of the Bavarian War of Succession, which lasted from July 1778 to May 21, 1779.<sup>571</sup>

As well as the reference to Naphtali Herz, there are some other incongruities in Auerbach's version of this letter. Dubno's praise for *Sefer netivot ha-shalom* seems highly improbable, given his critique of the publication in his booklet of rabbinical approbations. It would be odd for him to express himself so positively about the *Biur* in a personal letter after publicly denouncing it in his other writings, where he accuses Mendelssohn of dishonesty and compares him

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<sup>569</sup> Auerbach, *Geschichte der israelitischen Gemeinde*, 179-180.

<sup>570</sup> "die Rabbinen von Prague und Hamburg", *ibid.* 180.

<sup>571</sup> GSJ, vol. 19, 252-253.

to a snake.<sup>572</sup> Moreover, in the letter to Heidenheim he supposedly refers specifically to the beauty of Mendelssohn's German translation, which had been so harshly condemned not only by him but also by the rabbinical elite with whom Dubno was allied. Nevertheless, since the letter was allegedly written in 1789, that is, several years after Dubno's departure from Berlin, it is not impossible that with the passage of time, his anger with Mendelssohn had subsided. Dubno's highly critical opinion of the German translation of the Pentateuch might have been due solely to his disappointment with Mendelssohn's insufficient appreciation of his own efforts. While it is not certain whether he changed his attitude towards *Sefer netivot ha-shalom* at a later stage of his life, in the *haskamah* he provided for Wolf Heidenheim's German translation of the *Maḥzor*, he did not shy away from praising the work unreservedly.<sup>573</sup>

Despite all these reservations regarding the reliability of Dubno's account as it appears in Auerbach's version of his letter, one cannot exclude the possibility that shortly before his death, Naftali Herz did visit Berlin, where he could have met Dubno and reproached him for his involvement with the Biur project, having learned about it in person from Dubno before it was officially announced in print. One reason for crediting the authenticity of Auerbach's German translation of Dubno's letter might be its style. Dubno's Hebrew writings, including his private correspondence, tend to be replete with *melitsot*. He often expresses himself loquaciously, employs hyperbole and at times resorts to highly emotional language. Although the original Hebrew version of the letter was supposedly lost, this particular style of writing is recognisable even in the German translation.

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<sup>572</sup> Kamenetsky, "Haskamot", *Yeshurun* 9 (2001), 751.

<sup>573</sup> Heidenheim, *Sefer kerovot*, 5b-6b.

Moreover, the letter touches on subjects which we know to have been of interest to Dubno, such as Hebrew grammar and literature. On the other hand, it also contains some disparaging comments about Hasidism, which have led Sandler to cast doubt on the reliability of their attribution to Dubno, while the humorous, mocking description of Hasidic prayer may well reflect Dubno's sense of humour, but there is no evidence that he ever engaged in the writing of satires.<sup>574</sup>

As the reasons for Dubno's withdrawal from the Biur project remains unclear, his quarrel with Mendelssohn has been viewed in a variety of ways by later scholars. Dubno's own accounts of the relationship were interpreted by Mendelssohn's critics as proof of the latter's dislike of Polish Jews. Peretz Smolenskin, for example, wrote that Mendelssohn "fiercely persecuted every Polish scholar who arrived there [in Berlin], ensuring that he would have no hope of making a name for himself there. This is what he did to [Solomon] Maimon, to [Isaac] Satanov, to Solomon Dubno and to many others like them."<sup>575</sup> Similarly, Sandler criticises Kayserling, Mendelssohn's biographer, for his lack of objectivity in assessing the nature of the conflict between Mendelssohn and Dubno. In his opinion, Dubno was a victim of discrimination on account of his Polish origins.<sup>576</sup>

Simon Bernfeld, too, believes that the underestimation of Dubno's important contribution to the Biur project reflected the prejudice against Polish Jews that was prevalent in Prussia: "he [Wessely] acquired a good reputation in

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<sup>574</sup> See for example Dubno's rhymed Purim riddle on wine that brings "happiness and joy to the Jews" at the last two pages of a manuscript of David Franco-Mendes' *Masekhet Purim yerushalmi* at the National Library of Israel, microfilm no. F 39482. For a solution of the riddle, see: Dr. H. Somerhausen, "Betrachtungen und Zusätze zum Berichte über die Purim-Literatur", *Literaturblatt des Orients* 11 (1850), 181.

<sup>575</sup> Smolenskin, "She'elat Yehudim - she'elat ḥayim", n. 2.

(...) "רדף בעברה נוראה את כל חכם מפולין אשר בא שמה ולו היתה תקוה לעשות לו שם, כן עשה למיימון וכן לסאטאנוב וכן לר"ש דובנא ולרבים כמוהם."

<sup>576</sup> Sandler, *Ha-be'ur la-Torah*, 16.

our literature and in the history of the Jewish people thanks to the different circumstances of his life, and because, unlike the poor, wise Rabbi Solomon Dubno, he was not born in Poland".<sup>577</sup> Bernfeld does not exclude the possibility that Dubno's participation in the Biur might have been motivated by the expectation of financial gain,<sup>578</sup> but he does not doubt Dubno's scholarly merit:

"We see with our own eyes that the translation would not have gained its place in the house of Israel if not for the commentary of Rabbi Solomon Dubno. (...) As it is known, there are German scholars who prize the translation, and argue that thanks to it, German Jews have been liberated from the burden of suffering "the Polish *melameds*", but here history comes and strikes them on their faces [that is, proves them wrong]. The Torah that Moses put before Israel needed the labor of Rabbi Solomon Dubno, the "Polish" scholar, and when he returned to his country and his homeland, Mendelssohn suffered a great loss as a result."<sup>579</sup>

Also Klausner regarded the financial circumstances and different personalities of the two scholars as the root cause of the dispute between them. He argued that while Mendelssohn was an accomplished European Enlightenment intellectual and an aesthete, Dubno, who lacked the benefit of a

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<sup>577</sup> Simon Bernfeld, *Dor tahpukhot* (Warsaw: 1897), vol. 1, 100.

<sup>578</sup> *Ibid.* 87.

<sup>579</sup> *Ibid.* 95.

"כי עינינו הרואות, כי ההעתקה בעצמה לא יכלה לקנות לה מקומה בבית ישראל לולא באור הר"ש מדובנא (...). כנודע יש מהחכמים הגרמנים, אשר יגדילו את ערך התרגום גם בזה, כי על ידיו יצאו היהודים הגרמנים לחירות מתחת עול סבלות "המלמדים הפולנאים", והנה באה ההסטוריא וטופחת על פניהם. זאת התורה אשר שמ משה לפני ישראל היתה צריכה למלאכתו של ר' שלמה מדובנא, החכם "הפולנאי", וכאשר פנה החכם הזה והלך אל ארצו ואל מולדתו היה להרמבמ"ן הפסד גדול ע"י הצער הזה."



modern European education, had “the flavour“ of a traditional *yeshivah* student. The rabbinical elite’s disapproval of the German Torah translation was only the last straw that broke his back and led to his premature departure from Berlin.<sup>580</sup>

Following Dubno’s withdrawal, his major contribution to the project was gradually forgotten. His contemporaries generally mentioned him with respect but chose not to elaborate on the process that culminated in the publication of *Sefer netivot ha-shalom*, thus avoiding the need to refer to the breakdown of Dubno’s relations with Mendelssohn. The whole affair has given rise to a great deal of unease among Mendelssohn’s biographers, who refer to it only briefly or else completely omit it from their reports on the production and publication of *Sefer netivot ha-shalom*. In this context, one should take into account the extent to which Mendelssohn was idealised by members of his immediate entourage. David Friedländer, for example, who wished to transmit to the next generations only good impressions of Mendelssohn, made no mention at all in his writings of his idol’s problematic relationship with Dubno.<sup>581</sup> Joseph Mendelssohn, too, in his biography of his father, did not mention any of the collaborators on the project, presenting it as the product of his father’s work alone.<sup>582</sup>

Isaac Euchel describes Dubno as an accomplished grammarian who was of great help to Mendelssohn, but he, too, remains silent on the dispute that erupted between them, and makes no mention at all of Dubno’s withdrawal from

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<sup>580</sup> Klausner, *Hiṣṭoryah shel ha-sifrut ha-ivrit ha-ḥadashah*, vol. 1, 73.

<sup>581</sup> See the description of Mendelssohn in David Friedländer, *Moses Mendelssohn: Fragmente von ihm und über ihn* (Berlin: Friedrich Enslin, 1819 ), 12 - “His unimpeachable character needs no concealment of weaknesses, his virtues no enhancement, his kindness no literary ornaments” [“Sein fleckenloser Charakter bedarf keiner Verbergung der Schwächen, seine Tugenden keiner Verschönerung, seine Liebenswürdigkeit keine Nachhülfe durch Redeschmuck.”].

<sup>582</sup> Joseph Mendelssohn, “Moses Mendelssohn’s Lebensgeschichte”, 25-27.

the project. He praises the idea of publishing a German translation of the Pentateuch without ever referring to the rabbinical elite's objections.<sup>583</sup> His account, which is suffused with veneration for Mendelssohn, goes as far as to suggest that it was God himself who destined him to become a great leader of the Jewish people.<sup>584</sup>

Perez Sandler highlights yet another possibility, arguing that the conflict between Mendelssohn and Dubno originated in the accusation of embezzlement, which Dubno had apparently levelled against Mendelssohn's brother, Saul. While the exact details of the affair are unknown, according to Sandler a reference to it occurs in a letter Dubno sent to Moses Mendelssohn on September 22, 1780 in which he allegedly alludes to the accusation with a word play on the Hebrew form of Saul's name, Shaul, which means 'borrowed' and is an allusion to 2 Kings 6:5, "Alas, my master! It was borrowed" (*Ahah adoni, ve-hu sha'ul*).<sup>585</sup>

"And if with his letter of mine I have acted inappropriately (Esther 4:16) by failing to take account of my insignificance and to measure it against your own high standing and importance, do forgive me, as your eminence and your humility go hand in hand. Judge me by my pure intention (which, doubtlessly, you have tested and of which you are aware, and even if you have entertained a small doubt about me, this was not of your own making,

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<sup>583</sup> Isaac Euchel, *Toldot Rabenu he-ḥakham Moshe ben Menahem* (Vienna: G. Holzinger, 1814), 26-28.

<sup>584</sup> Moshe Pelli, "Moshe Mendelson ki-demut ha-yehudi he-ḥadash be-moral biografi shel Yitzkhak Aykhl", *Bitsaron* 45-48, (1990-1991), 124.

<sup>585</sup> See Dubno's letter in: GSJ, vol. 19, 260.

Sandler, *Ha-be'ur la-Torah*, 24, n. 39; Altmann and Michael express a similar opinion: Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn*, 400; Reuven Michael, GSJ, vol. 20.2, 387.

for alas, my master, it was [your own brother] Saul [who was to blame])<sup>586</sup>  
and not by my word, for who does not occasionally stumble over his  
words?"<sup>587</sup>

While it is possible that Saul was somehow involved in the nascent conflict between Dubno and Moses Mendelssohn, the allusion to his name in Dubno's letter is too subtle to lead to any far-reaching conclusions. Whatever the reasons for the breakdown of relations between Dubno and Mendelssohn, it is clear that his relationship with Mendelssohn's entourage was problematic all along, as he explicitly states his disapproval of the Mendelssohnian circle in the letters he wrote to Mendelssohn himself in 1780,<sup>588</sup> and, allegedly, to Heidenheim in 1789.<sup>589</sup> The stark contrast between Dubno and Mendelssohn's salon visitors is evident from differences in physical appearance between them. The two extant portraits of Solomon Dubno depict a bearded religious Jew. The first one is a print by Franciscus Sansom after an image authored by a person named "Schabracq."<sup>590</sup> The oval etching is surrounded by a Hebrew text "Our teacher

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<sup>586</sup> Reuven Michael translates this part of the sentence as "ach, mein Herr, das ist die Hölle" ["alas, my master, this is hell"], reading "שאול" as "sheol."

Reuven Michael, GSJ, vol. 20.2, 385.

<sup>587</sup> GSJ, vol. 19, 260.

"ואם פרעתי באגרתי זאת חק המוסר אשר לא כדת, ולא הבטתי אל שפלות ערכי, ולא הערכתי אותה נגד מעלת כבודך, הלא עמך הסליחה, ובמקום גדולתך שם ענותנותך, ותדין אותי לפי מחשבתי הטהורה (אשר בלי ספק הקרתני ותדע, ואם כבר חשדתי בדבר מועט, כי לא מלבך עשית זאת, אהה אדוני והוא שאול) ולא לפי דבורי, כי מי הוא זה שלא יכשל לפעמים בדבריו?"

<sup>588</sup> GSJ, vol. 19, 258-261.

<sup>589</sup> Auerbach, *Geschichte der israelitischen Gemeinde*, 179-183. For a discussion of authenticity of Dubno's letter to Heidenheim, see pages 187-191 of this dissertation.

<sup>590</sup> There are two known copies of this print: one is held in Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, the other can be found on the front page of Dubno's booklist stored at Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana.

Solomon Dubno, *Reshimah mi-sefarim sheli* (Amsterdam: 1771), Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana, HS. ROS. 469.

and master Solomon, the son of our teacher and master Joel of Dubno. Born on the 28th of Ethanim<sup>591</sup> [October 12], 1738 (“I have not departed from thy judgments”) (Psalms 119:102).<sup>592</sup> Drawn and etched in the year 1791 (*shannah metukah*<sup>593</sup>).<sup>594</sup> Another portrait of Dubno was published without any references in the *Jewish Encyclopedia*.<sup>595</sup> The etching depicts Dubno in exactly the same position and the same background, but with an older-looking face.

If indeed, as would seem to be the case, Dubno kept up his Eastern-European Jewish appearance, it is not surprising that he did not feel at ease with the acculturated Berlin maskilim, who were clean shaven and wigged, as was fashionable in non-Jewish western society.<sup>596</sup> Moses Mendelssohn, Markus Herz, David Friedländer, Daniel Itzig, Naftali Wessely, Herz Homberg and Solomon Maimon had all adopted the European fashion of that time.<sup>597</sup> By

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Franciscus Sansom; Schabracq, *Portret van Salomon ben Joel Dubno* (Rotterdam: 1790/1791), Rijksmuseum, RP-P-1906-2510.

<sup>591</sup> *Ethanim* - another name for the month of Tishri that appears in the Hebrew Bible before the period of the Babylonian Exile.

<sup>592</sup> The numerical value of the expression *me-mishpatekhah* is 499, which here denotes the year 5499 in the Jewish calendar, or 1738 in the Gregorian calendar.

<sup>593</sup> The numerical value of the word *metukah* is 551, which denotes the year 5551 in the Jewish calendar, or the years 1790/1791 in the Gregorian calendar.

<sup>594</sup>

”מוהר”ר שלמה במוהר”ר יואל ז”ל מדובנא רבתי. נולד לירח האתנים ממשפטיך לא סרתי לפ”ק. צורתו נחקקה בשנה מתוקה.”

<sup>595</sup> Isidore Singer (ed.), *Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York; London: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1901), vol. 5, xvi; 7.

<sup>596</sup> “Haskalah”, *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 8, 434.

<sup>597</sup> See for example:

Johann Christoph Frisch, *Portrait of Moses Mendelssohn* (1778). Original in the possession of Doctor Cécile Lowenthal-Hensel, Berlin. Reproduced in: Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn*, cover.

Friedrich Georg Weitsch, *Portrait of Marcus Herz* (Berlin: 1795), Jüdisches Museum Berlin. Reproduced in: Christoph Maria Leder, *Die Grenzgänge des Marcus Herz* (München: Waxmann, 2007), the cover;

Caroline Bardua, *Portrait of David Friedländer*, Staatsarchiv, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin. Reproduced in: Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn*, 444.

Joseph Friedrich August Darbes, *Portrait of Daniel Itzig* (Berlin: 1787), Jüdisches Museum Berlin;

contrast, the traditional appearance of religious Jews was ridiculed by members of the rich Prussian-Jewish elites, who associated them with ignorance of secular sciences and modern languages.<sup>598</sup> In addition, Dubno's uncompromising attitude towards the Christian world, which was expressed in *Alim li-terufah*, must have earned him a few enemies in the Berlin Jewish community, whose aspiration was to achieve emancipation and socio-cultural integration into Christian society. Dubno's exposure to the disdain of acculturated Western maskilim might have resembled the experience of Baruch Schick, a Polish Jew who spent one year in Berlin and became an acquaintance of Mendelssohn.<sup>599</sup>

### **Dubno's own Pentateuch edition**

Following his withdrawal from the Biur project, Dubno decided to write a new commentary, and to replace the controversial German translation with Targum Onkelos and Rashi's commentary. He left Prussia and embarked on a prolonged period of travel in search of patrons who would support the publication of his own edition of the Pentateuch. For that purpose he visited many European cities, including Shklov, Volozhin, Brody, Lviv, Frankfurt an der Oder, Prague, Mainz, Karlsruhe and Nancy. He managed to find several hundreds of subscribers to his Pentateuch edition, whose approbations were collected in two

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Daniel Berger, *Hartwig Wessely (1791)*, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Bildarchiv Austria, Porträtsammlung. Reproduced in: Ingrid Lohmann; Rainer Wenzel; Uta Lohmann, *Naphtali Herz Wessely Worte des Friedens und der Wahrheit* (München: Waxmann, 2014), the cover;

Author unknown, *Portrait of Herz Homberg*, National Library of Israel, Schwadron Collection.

Wilhelm Arndt, *Portrait of Solomon Maimon (1800)*, Schwadron Collection, National Library of Israel. Reproduced in: Sadowski, *Haskala und Lebenswelt*, 44.

<sup>598</sup> Fishman, *Russia's First Modern Jews*, 35-36.

<sup>599</sup> *Ibid.*

booklets, one with the endorsements of Eastern-European, and the other of Western-European rabbis. The former, known as *Pinkas ha-ḥatumim al ha-ḥumashim shel rav Dubno*, is held by the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy in St. Petersburg. While the second booklet has been lost, parts of it have been reprinted by Gabriel Polak, who estimated the total number of subscribers to have been about 1,200.<sup>600</sup> Dubno's commitment to the project, which took him to so many Jewish communities, must have been unshakable, as travel in Eastern Europe was particularly difficult at that time. He spent several months in Vilna, where he met Zalman, brother of Hayim of Volozhin and himself a student of the Vilna Gaon. The Lithuanian rabbi praised Dubno's biblical commentary for juxtaposing a diversity of *peshat* (literal) interpretations and for elucidating difficulties which he had not himself been able to solve. He therefore gave his approbation to *Tikun soferim* and declared his readiness to buy a printed copy of Dubno's Pentateuch edition. Also the Chief Rabbi of Vilna, Shmuel ben Avigdor, provided a *haskamah* for Dubno's Pentateuch edition in which he wrote that while some Polish and even some German Jews had criticised the German version of the Pentateuch in which Dubno had been involved, he would be interested in Dubno's own commentary, which had the merit of being accompanied by the traditional Aramaic translation, Targum Onkelos.<sup>601</sup> Other leading Talmudic authorities who provided Dubno with approbations were Hayim

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<sup>600</sup> *Pinkas ha-ḥatumim al ha-ḥumashim shel rav Dubno*, the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy, St. Petersburg, Ms. A 74; Gabriel Polak, *Ben Gorni* (Amsterdam: David Proops, 1851), 41-51. Approbations from both booklets have also been reproduced in Kamenetsky, "Haskamot," *Yeshurun* 9, 711-755.

<sup>601</sup> *Pinkas ha-ḥatumim*, 16a or 6 (double pagination). Also reproduced in: Kamenetsky, "Haskamot," *Yeshurun* 9, 714-715.

of Volozhin,<sup>602</sup> Ezekiel Landau<sup>603</sup> and Eleazar Fleckeles.<sup>604</sup> Many rabbis explicitly declared their readiness to purchase Dubno's Pentateuch edition once it was published. David ben Shimon Broda, scribe and rabbinical judge of the Vilna community, wrote in his *haskamah* that "(...) not everyone is pleased with the German translation, and certainly there is no need to explain the great benefits that his [Dubno's] commentary and *Tikun soferim* would yield (...)." <sup>605</sup> Arie Leib Breslau of Rotterdam wrote about *Tikun soferim* that "since the time when Israel were exiled from their land, we have not seen such a great collection [of excerpts] from books by the *rishonim*, may their memory be blessed, dealing with the topic of *Masoret seyag la-Torah*."<sup>606</sup>

While one can only speculate on Dubno's main reason for withdrawing from the Biur project, the approbation he obtained from Moses ben Mordechai Meisel, *shamash* (beadle) of Vilna, hints at the explanation that he must have given to the rabbinic authorities he encountered in Eastern Europe. According to Meisel, Dubno had genuinely intended his commentary and *Tikun soferim* to be incorporated in Mendelssohn's German translation of the Pentateuch, but since that translation gave rise to controversy among the Jewish population, he decided to publish his own Pentateuch edition, where the German text was replaced with Targum Onkelos. While he expresses admiration for both Mendelssohn and

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<sup>602</sup> Ibid. 96a or 117 (double pagination); Kamenetsky, "Haskamot," *Yeshurun* 9, 726.

<sup>603</sup> Kamenetsky, "Haskamot," *Yeshurun* 9, 733.

<sup>604</sup> Ibid.

<sup>605</sup> *Pinkas ha-ḥatumim*, 16a or 6 (double pagination). Also reproduced in: Kamenetsky, "Haskamot", *Yeshurun* 9, 716.

"(...) וגם התרגום האשכנזי לא דעת כל אדם נוחה הימנו... ובודאי התועלת מזה אין צריך לבאר כי יצא תועלת גדול הן מביאורו והן מתיקון סופרים (...)." .

<sup>606</sup> Kamenetsky, "Haskamot", *Yeshurun* 9, 745.

"(...) אשר מיום הוגל ישראל מעל אדמתו בעינינו לא ראינו כמוהו קיבוץ נפלא מכל ספרי הראשונים ז"ל אשר חוברו בעניני מסורת סייג לתורה (...)." .

Dubno, he declares that he would study only the work of the latter, because it does not include foreign translations:

“(…) he [Dubno] improved on the Torah as translated by Moses [Mendelssohn], the greatest of great men whose reputation exceeds that of the most distinguished of rabbis, in order that every man should master and speak [the Hebrew text of Scripture] as if it was his mother tongue. And Solomon [Dubno] acted wisely; he fenced it (Isaiah 5:2), as he explains in his own commentary, for the sake of preserving its purity. While adhering to the verses of Moses, ‘Solomon’s wisdom excelled’ (I Kings 4:30) as he cleared [the text] of stones [following the metaphor of the vineyard in Isaiah 5:2], measuring length, weight and quantity (Leviticus 19:35) in his work entitled *Tikun soferim*, which would have been his main project were it not for the [German] translation, which became Solomon’s adversary (after II Samuel 19:23), causing him to change his mind, because some people had complained [about it]. He turned away from the [foreign] tongue (a play on Joshua 15:2) [of Mendelssohn’s German translation] ‘to the land of the children of his people’ (Numbers 22:5), and then wondered what he should do with his ‘vineyard’ [still following the metaphor of Isaiah 5] in order to put a stop to the people’s complaints and their campaign against it. He therefore broke the pact that Moses [Mendelssohn] had made with him, in order to build his own altar of print on which to publish, as a burnt offering, his own edition [of the Pentateuch with his commentary] made in his own image and likeness, except that he substituted the German [translation] with [Targum] Onkelos, thereby giving



[the work] the seal of truth. And now, 'When Solomon had finished' (I Kings:9:1) offering it on the altar in its entirety, he will deliver it without delay. And when the time comes, I, too, a lad who [until now] 'had neither dressed his feet nor trimmed his beard' (2 Samuel, 19:24), shall bind as a crown to me (Job 31:36) the crown which my master and teacher [Mendelssohn] has bound to his own head – Scripture and the Masorah, which remained unpublished until Solomon took it upon himself."<sup>607</sup>

Ezekiel Landau provided Dubno with his *haskamah* on January 2, 1786. He praised Dubno's expertise in grammar, as well as his *Tikun soferim* and commentary to *Sefer netivot ha-shalom*. Landau emphasised that Dubno's new Pentateuch edition would be free from grammatical errors and would use Targum Onkelos as a translation. He also explained that Dubno had asked him earlier for his approbation for the Biur, but he had to refuse, since the publication included the German translation of the Pentateuch.<sup>608</sup>

"(...) the sage, the great grammarian, our master and teacher, Rabbi Solomon Dubno, has already proved his in-depth knowledge of grammar

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<sup>607</sup> *Pinkas ha-hatumim*, 21a or 13 (double pagination). Also reproduced in: Kamenetsky, "Haskamot", *Yeshurun* 9, 739.

"הוא שפר התורה אשר עשה משה בתרגומו, אדם גדול בענקים גדול מרבן שמו, להיות כל איש שורר ומדבר כלשון עמו, ויחכם שלמה, ויעזקהו כאשר יבאר בביאורו בגלל תומו, בפסוקי דפסקי משה בהם דבק שלמה, ותרב חכמת שלמה, ויסלקהו במדה במשקל ובמסורה שעמו, בחבורו אשר תקון סופרים שמו, והיה להם שלמה, אלמלא תרגומו, אשר היה שטן לשמה, בשנותו את טעמו, בעיני אנשי פלניא כי הכלימו, מן הלשון הפונה לארץ בני עמו, אז אמר שלמה מה לעשות לכרמו, הסר תלונו עם והלחמו, פרץ גדרו אשר עשה משה אתו עמו, לבנות במות מזבח הדפוס לעצמו, והעלה עליו עולות כדמותו וכצלמו, רק האשכנזי באונקלוס יחלוף מקומו, אז יקהל שלמה את אשר יתן אמת חותמו והיה ככלות שלמה, להעלות על מזבח עד תומו, לא יאחד לשלמה, והיה כי יבא יומו, גם אנכי הצעיר אשר לא עשה רגלו ולא שפמו, אענדנו עטרות לי בעטרה שעטר לו אמ"ו, במקרא ומסורת אשר היא לא נדפסה עד אשר כב יהי עם שלמה."

<sup>608</sup> His words contradict the account of the events given by Mendelssohn, who claimed that Dubno asked Landau for his assistance regarding inverted *nuns*, but did not ask for Landau's *haskamah*. See: pages 174-176.

and the Masorah in the first two volumes of the Pentateuch printed in Berlin. There, in his *Tikun soferim*, one can find extraordinary things which denote his great expertise in this profession. To this [*Tikun soferim*] was attached his fine composition called *Biur*, in which he assembled a prize collection of interpretations by the greatest of our Torah commentators, and to which he added a good measure of his own. Then, when the printing of his work began in the above-mentioned community [Berlin], he asked me in a letter to give him my approbation and I refused, because in that publication the holy was mixed with the profane, as he attached to the Torah a commentary written in a foreign language, whose author had called it a German Targum. We feared that this foreign tongue would be a hindrance to Jewish children and [lead to] neglect of Torah study. Therefore, I refrained from approving it (...)."<sup>609</sup>

Being the only initiator of the enterprise, Dubno would be able to devote a significant part of the publication to questions of grammar, an ambitious undertaking that had not been approved by Mendelssohn and which might have been the reason for Dubno's withdrawal from his work on *Sefer netivot hashalom*. In his introduction to the first booklet of *haskamot*, Dubno states that the science of grammar has been largely forgotten.<sup>610</sup> He excuses those Jews whose need to earn a living leaves them no time for study. He also justifies well-to-do

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<sup>609</sup> Kamenetsky, "Haskamot," *Yeshurun* 9, 733.

"(...) החכם המדקדק מגדול מוהר"ר שלמה דובנא כבר הראה עצם ידו יד הגדולה בדקדוק ובספר המסורה עפ"י שני חומשים הראשונים שנדפסו בברלין שם יראה הרואה בתיקון סופרים שלו דברים נפלאים בעוצם בקיאותו במלאכה זו מצורף לזה חבורו הנחמד קראו ביאור, ליקט פניני אמרים מדברים גדולי מפרשי התורה והוסיף תוספת מרובה מדת טובה משלו, ואז בהתחלת הדפסתו בק"ק הנ"ל, חילה פני במכתב ליתן לו הסכמה ולא נעניתי לו כי חוברו לה יחדיו בהדפסה היא קודש וחול כי צירף לתורה פירוש לעז אשר קרוא מחברו תרגום אשכנזי ואנחנו חיישינן ללעז ההוא שיבא ממנו מכשול לילדי העברים וביטול תורה, ולכן נמנעתי מלהסכים עמו (...)." .

<sup>610</sup> Kamenetsky, "Haskamot," *Yeshurun* 9, 746.

Jews, who are unable to master grammar because they lack the guidance of teachers or fellow learners. He believes that his work would facilitate their study, as it gathers all the elucidations of grammar by the most renowned authorities on the subject, and summarises them in an easily accessible way (“in easy, pure and clear language”).<sup>611</sup>

It needs to be emphasised that Dubno certainly had only male readers in mind, just as Mendelssohn, who explicitly said that the translation was intended for his sons.<sup>612</sup> Olga Litvak notices that at the time that *Sefer netivot ha-shalom* was published, the Hebrew Bible was read mostly by women in a Yiddish translation, such as *Tsene-Rene*, and she believes the Biur to be an attempt to reintroduce the study of the Pentateuch into the male sphere of interest. Women were not taught Hebrew, and Jewish readers who had no education in Talmudic literature were pejoratively described as “women and men who are like women.” Books destined for those lay readers were composed in vernacular and included practical knowledge such as religious customs and health-related matters, or fiction works to be read for pleasure.<sup>613</sup> Even educated Jewish women of higher spheres, while well-acquainted with non-Jewish literature, usually did not read maskilic Hebrew works.<sup>614</sup> Only 3 out of 122 subscribers to *Sefer netivot ha-*

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<sup>611</sup> Ibid. 747.

“בלשון קל וצח וברור”

<sup>612</sup> “When the Eternal graced me with male children and the time came to teach them Torah and instruct them in the words of the living God, in accordance with what is written, I began to translate the five books of the Torah [...] for the benefit of these young children.” Translation taken from Gottlieb (ed.), Moses Mendelssohn, 197.

GSJ, vol. 14, 243:

“ויהי כאשר חנן לי ה' ילדים בנים זכרים, והגיע העת ללמדם תורה, ולשננם דברי אלהים חיים ככתוב, הואלתי לתרגם את חמשת חמשי התורה בלשון אשכנז [...] לתועלת הילדים הרכים.”

<sup>613</sup> Litvak, *Haskalah: The Romantic Movement in Judaism*, 39-44.

<sup>614</sup> Natalie Naimark-Goldberg, “Reading and Modernization: The Experience of Jewish Women in Berlin around 1800”, *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies & Gender Issues*, No. 15, Women and Books (Spring 2008), 58-87.

*shalom* who were based in Berlin were female. Among the subscribers was also Fanny von Arnstein, who ran a popular salon in Vienna, and a mother of David Friedländer.<sup>615</sup> Nevertheless, most probably, none of those women knew Hebrew and they could only read the Judeo-German translation of the Pentateuch, while the accompanying commentary and *Tikun soferim* remained inaccessible to them.

Dubno explicitly denounces Mendelssohn's translation: "The study of a foreign language entails no obligation and no commandment; it is of no benefit to us, and nor is it our custom. It is nothing more than a waste of time in vain and, therefore, the German edition is of no use to us."<sup>616</sup> These words stand in stark contrast to Mendelssohn's testimony in *Or la-netivah*, where he writes that Dubno was very enthusiastic about the translation and was adamant that it should be published.

Dubno also criticises Naftali Wessely for deviating from the literal meaning (*peshat*) of Scripture, neglecting the grammatical aspects and devoting much of his commentary on the Book of Leviticus to homiletics (*derash*). In his opinion, there were already enough remarkable works of this kind, while the main reason why some Polish Jews might have been tempted to buy *Sefer netivot ha-shalom* was his own commentary and *Tikun soferim*. Dubno claims that while the readers were impressed by his *Alim li-terufah* and his commentary on the books of Genesis and Exodus precisely because they were focused on Hebrew grammar

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<sup>615</sup> Lowenstein, "The Readership of Mendelssohn's Bible Translation", 183, 204, 208-209.

<sup>616</sup> *Ibid.* 749.

(...) "אין בזה לא חובה ולא מצוה ולא תועלת ללמוד לשון זר אצלנו ואינו נהוג בנו, ואין זה רק אבוד זמן על חנם, ולכן אין בהעתקה האשכנזית ההוא תועלת לנו כלל וכלל."

and the literal meaning of Scripture, they were dismayed by Wessely's commentary on Leviticus ("Because the book was marred by a very grace defect"<sup>617</sup>) and regretted buying it. These readers' responses convinced Dubno to publish his own Pentateuch edition, together with his detailed grammatical commentary. This apparent enthusiasm for the study of Masoretic punctuation seems rather doubtful, and one may question the reliability of Dubno's testimony on this point.

Dubno believed that some readers had mistakenly attributed the commentary on Leviticus to himself:

"They wondered how the first two books and the third one could have been composed by the same author, how two contradictions could have been created by a single man, how one who had enlightened the world could have begun to walk in darkness, how sweet, healing waters could have turned into tears, how a great, wide sea could have shrunk so much that it became a brook (*mayim mefakim*, Ezekiel 47:2)."<sup>618</sup>

This passage is followed by Dubno's claim that he had abandoned the Biur project because of his financial dispute with Mendelssohn, and that he had been persuaded to publish his own Pentateuch edition in order not to deprive others of the pleasure of reading his work:

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<sup>617</sup> Ibid. 754.

"וכיון שנתקלקל ספר זה קלקול רב ועצום."

<sup>618</sup> Ibid.

" (...) המה ראו כן תמהו איך יצאו ב' ספרים הראשונים עם הג' מפי מחבר אחד, איך יצא מאיש אחד שני הפכים, ואיך המאיר לבני העולם בספרו ילך חשכים, או איכה יהפכו מים מתוקים מים המרפאים למי בוכים, ואיככה זה הים הגדול ורחב ידים יקטן עדי נעשה מים מפכים (...)."

“I laboured day and night, in darkness as in light, I did not spare my health nor pursue human pleasures; I rejected all food and abhorred all drink, until I became unwell and my spirit broke within me; I became ill and there remained no strength in me (Daniel 10:8). Yet despite all this, my hands did not grow limp from labor, and I gave my eyes no sleep nor any rest to my eyelids, until I composed these books, bringing to light matters which had been hidden before (after Job 28:11). And after all this, a man [Mendelssohn] who had not laboured on them [books], has appropriated all this work by exerting his force and might, with the result that I was not paid even as little as a hair’s breadth out of all my due earnings.”<sup>619</sup>

While accusing Mendelssohn (without explicitly naming him) of stealing his work, Dubno also claims sole authorship of the commentary on the Book of Exodus, without giving any credit to Mendelssohn, who does, in fact, seem to have been the main author of this volume, with Dubno providing him only with auxiliary comments.<sup>620</sup> In addition, he criticises Mendelssohn for giving a Hebrew title to a work that was, in fact, written and published in German:

“(…) it is truly surprising that the German translator, who thinks that he is wiser than everyone else and who is, in his own opinion, superior to all

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<sup>619</sup> Ibid, 755.

“ כי עמלתי יום ולילה כחשכה כאורה, על בריאות גופי לא חסתי, אחד תענוגות אדם לא הלכתי, כל אוכל תתעב נפשי וגם כל משקה אשר ישתה תעבתי, עדי נהייתי ונחליתי ונשבר רוחי בקרבי ולמשכב נפליתי, וכח עוד לא עצרתי, ועכ”ז לא רפו ידי ממלאכתי, ולא נתתי שינה לעיני ולעפעפי תנומה, עדי חברתי הספרים האלה והוצאתי לאור תעלומה, ואחר כל איש אשר לא עמל במ לקח לו את כל עמל בכח ועצמה, “ומכל אשר הרווחתי לא בא לידי אף במלא נימא (…).”

<sup>620</sup> See the discussion of Dubno’s remarks on Mendelssohn’s commentary to the Book of Exodus on pages 147-152.

other authors, surpassing them intellectually with his insight and subtleness of mind (while we would call him “cunning” inasmuch as this term in its general sense means the same as “wise” while having quite a different meaning in its particular sense, because the adjective “wise” is used only in the upright path and is accomplished in all his actions, never straying either right or left, while the adjective “cunning” is normally used in reference to one who pretends to be perfectly upright (*tam derekh*, Proverbs 10:29), honest, faithful and accomplished in all his actions, while beneath this exterior he is covered with the scabs (after Leviticus 13:8) of injustice and theft, causing confusion with wickedness and deception, which is why the Torah described the snake as the most cunning, not the wisest of all creatures, because when he tempted Eve he presented himself as upright and honest, as if he meant it to be for her own good that she should become like God.) How wrong was this translator when he referred to his German translation as ‘holy tongue’ or Targum (namely, the ‘Aramaic translation of the Hebrew Bible), which is unlike the wise among authors, who title their books in the same language as the one in which the books were composed. For surely, the title of a book defines it and comprises its contents, which is why it is appropriate for it to be in the language in which the book itself was composed, so that whoever knows no other language would understand from the title what the book is about, and the title would not be alien to him as it would be if it was in another language, as in the case of the sage Menasheh ben Yisrael, who

composed in Spanish a book of reconciliations (to reconcile contradictory biblical verses) and called it *Conciliador*<sup>621</sup> (...).<sup>622</sup>

Despite numerous expressions of support for the project, Dubno did not manage to raise enough funds for the publication of his new Torah edition. Although the practice of *prenumeraten*, paying in advance for a publication, was common in eighteenth-century Amsterdam,<sup>623</sup> and had been employed by Mendelssohn himself for the printing of *Sefer netivot ha-shalom*, it seems that Dubno did not receive any support of this kind from subscribers to his biblical commentary. Perhaps the reason for this was the unavailability of any written samples of the future work, or Dubno's lack of experience in managing such a major undertaking. While Mendelssohn had been assisted by a team of scholars, and enjoyed the backing of the Berlin financial elite, Dubno acted on his own. Moreover, all the books he had managed to print up until then turned out to be financial failures, and he could not guarantee to his subscribers that the new Pentateuch edition would ever see the light of day. In fact, the numerous rabbinical approbations he did obtain for this edition were probably given to him

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<sup>621</sup> Menasheh ben Yisrael, *El Conciliador* (Frankfurt: self-published, 1632).

<sup>622</sup> Kamenetsky, "Haskamot," *Yeshurun* 9, 751.

"ובאמת יש להפליא על המעתיק האשכנזי החושב שהחכים מכל האדם, ונעלה ונשגב לפי דעתו מכל המון מחברי הספרים, ועלה עליהם ברוח מבינתו ובדקות שכלו לפי מחשבתו (כאשר נתארהו גם אנחנו בשם ערום מכל שהוא משותף לשם חכם בהוראתו הכללית, ונבדל ממנו בהוראה פרטית, כי שם חכם איננו תאר רק להולך בדרך היושר באמונה ובכשרון המעשה לא יטה מהם ימין ושמאל, אולם שם ערום הוא על הרוב תואר למראה עצמו תום דרך ויושר לבב באמונה ובכשרון המעשה, ותחת לבושו פשתה המספחת, העול והחמס ובלבל און ומרמה, ולכן תארה התורה את הנחש ערום מכל ולא חכם מכל, כי הוא היה מראה עצמו בלפתותו את חוה לתם דרך וישר לב ולטובתה נתכוין להיות כאלקים), איך נשתבש מאד בכנותו העתקתו האשכנזית בשם של לשה"ק או ארמי, לא כדרך חכמי מחברי הספרים שיכנו הספר שהוא בלשון שחובר בו, כדי שמי שאינו יודע רק הלשון ההוא יבין משמו גדרו ועניינו, ולא יהי' השם זר בעיניו כאשר יהי' מלשון אחר, כמו החכם מנשה בן ישראל שחבר ספר המכריע (להכריע בין הפסוקים הסותרים זה את זה) בלשון ספרדי, קראו שמו קונצליאקור שהוא לשון"

(Dubno does not complete the last sentence).

<sup>623</sup> Bar-Levav, "Amsterdam and the Inception of the Jewish Republic of Letters," 235.



not out of any genuine interest in his commentary but rather as an expression of rabbinic opposition to Mendelssohn's translation. Be that as it may, Dubno did not manage to finance the enterprise. In 1788 he published an advert, which he reproduced in his booklet of approbations, *Pinkas ha-ḥatumim*, asking the general public for a loan in order to publish his Pentateuch edition.<sup>624</sup> The loan, in the amount of 2,000 Gulden, was to be paid back out of the income that would be generated when the edition is sold,<sup>625</sup> but Dubno's plea failed to attract any responses, and, consequently, his project was never realised.

## Conclusion

According to Mendelssohn's testimony, Dubno was immediately captured by the idea of producing an edition of the Pentateuch translated into a modern language. Whether or not his account is accurate, it is certain that over the years, Dubno's opinion of the enterprise had shifted towards a more conservative stance. While he still acknowledged the need for a modern biblical commentary that would elaborate on the grammatical, interpretative, and geographical aspects of Scripture, he completely rejected the German translation and turned instead to the Targum Onkelos, an old and widely accepted Aramaic translation of the Pentateuch. This development might have resulted from the disappointing experience of his relationship with Mendelssohn and the sense that he was scorned by the German maskilim, as well as from his temporary return to Eastern Europe, where he encountered some rabbis who might have been interested in

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<sup>624</sup> Kamenetsky, "Haskamot," *Yeshurun* 9, 737.

<sup>625</sup> Polak, *Ben Gorni*, 43; GSJ, vol. 15.1, xl.

purchasing a new biblical commentary, but who would not have tolerated any controversial addenda such as the German translation. It seems that his final view of the Biur was shaped by the circumstances of his personal life rather than by any critical analysis of the contents of the work and its implications for the Jewish public. Dubno's plan to publish his own Pentateuch edition seemed to attract the attention and encouragement of the Eastern-European rabbis, who might have been motivated, at least to some extent, by Dubno's wish to triumph over Mendelssohn, who had rejected his introduction to *Sefer netivot ha-shalom*, shortened his *Tikun soferim*, and, most probably, paid him nothing or very little for the years of hard work that he had invested in the project. In Mendelssohn's defence, it should be stated that Dubno's vision of *Sefer netivot ha-shalom* was incongruous with the intellectual interests of German Jewish readers, as it focused on the grammatical aspects of biblical Hebrew, which would have seemed both tedious and irrelevant to those who were not in full command of the language. Although Mendelssohn's rejection of his technical introduction clearly injured Dubno's pride, it may well have been the right decision from his point of view as the project's publisher, who aimed to sell it in as many copies as possible. Furthermore, Mendelssohn had a different conception of how the study of the Pentateuch and the Hebrew grammar should be popularised among Jews, and it seems like he considered Dubno's methods inaccessible to non-experts in the Masorah.

The disagreement between Dubno and Mendelssohn that ended their joint work on the Biur can illustrate how two followers of the early Jewish Enlightenment, united by a shared wish to revive the study of the Pentateuch among the German Jewish population, were unable to reconcile their conflicting

visions regarding the final outcome of the project. Their argument reflects the differences within the early maskilic movement whose members were not able to mediate between incongruous polar stances. While both Mendelssohn and Dubno subscribed to the ideas of renewal of Hebrew language and Bible study, and both belonged to the plurivocal maskilic movement, it turned out that they were not able to complete the project of new Pentateuch edition together.

While Dubno was often portrayed by German maskilim and historians of the Haskalah as incompetent and uncooperative, it seems that he had all the knowledge and passion for the subject that was required for such a task. Mendelssohn himself played a major role in harming Dubno's reputation by claiming that the latter's withdrawal from the publication of *Sefer netivot ha-shalom* was motivated by greed and laziness. However, Dubno's talent was acknowledged by the rabbinical elite who believed that a new, cleared from grammatical mistakes, Pentateuch edition was desirable, and was ready to support his project provided that it was free from translations into modern languages.

### **Chapter 3: Dubno and the Hebrew language renewal**

#### **The study of Hebrew grammar among Ashkenazi Jewry**

Until the inclusion of grammar in the school curriculum in the eighteenth century, most Ashkenazi Jews had only a passive command of Hebrew, limited to the lexical level and devoid of any knowledge of grammatical rules.<sup>626</sup> From the fifteenth century onwards, the Ashkenazi educational programme was dominated by the teaching of Talmud and *halakhah* at the expense of the study of Tanakh, which would be taught without any grammatical explanation.<sup>627</sup> According to Irene Zwiep, there were two major periods in which the study of Hebrew grammar flourished. The first so-called 'Ashkenazic Renaissance' (1550-1620), took place in Eastern Europe. The Ashkenazi scholars of that time attempted to reconcile the Ashkenazi pronunciation, which distinguished five vowels, with the Masoretic punctuation, which employed seven different vowels. Study of grammar was meant to ensure the correct recitation of the Torah and liturgy, which gained additional importance with the spread of the kabbalistic tradition, as it ascribed a metaphysical dimension to the Hebrew language, and its followers believed that the correct pronunciation of prayers would contribute to the restoration of the cosmic order.<sup>628</sup> The second period in which the study of

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<sup>626</sup> Benjamin Harshav, "Masah al tehiyat ha-lashon ha-ivrit," *Alpayim* 2 (1990), 23–26.

<sup>627</sup> Erika Timm; Gustav A. Beckmann, *Historische Jiddische Semantik. Die Bibelübersetzungssprache als Faktor der Auseinanderentwicklung des jiddischen und des deutschen Wortschatzes* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2005), 9-14; Harshav, "Masah al tehiyat ha-lashon ha-ivrit," 23.

<sup>628</sup> Irene E. Zwiep, "Linguistic Knowledge: Grammar and Literacy in Modern Ashkenaz", *Jahrbuch des Simon-Dubnow-Instituts* 8 (2009), 279-298.

grammar gained importance began in the eighteenth century with the scholarship of Solomon Hanau (1687-1746) who, in his *Tsohar ha-tevah*, published in Berlin in 1733, defined the field of grammar as a profession (*melakhah*), thus investing it with a new scholarly status.<sup>629</sup> Dubno owned two copies of the first edition of this book,<sup>630</sup> and while he never referred to this definition, in his writings he always described himself first and foremost as a professional grammarian, *medakdek*.

In their analysis of the nineteenth-century Ashkenazi curriculum, Iris Parush and Saadya Sternberg present the study of Hebrew grammar as an occupation traditionally reserved for the scholarly elite, who were unwilling to share this knowledge with the common people, as this would have empowered them by enhancing their capacity for understanding the Scripture for themselves. They argue that control over the study of language enabled the rabbinical elite to control the religious beliefs and customs of the Ashkenazi masses, who lacked the skills required for questioning their authority, and who could not access the literature produced in Hebrew by the proponents of Haskalah, including their grammatical works.<sup>631</sup> The fear that this type of Hebrew literature was subversive and would undermine rabbinical authority was expressed by some of the critics of Haskalah, such as Ezekiel Landau, David ben Nathan Tevele of Lissa (d. 1792) and Pinhas Hurwitz (1730-1805).<sup>632</sup> However, this conclusion seems to be far-fetched, as the field of grammar was often a subject of study of a narrow circle of

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<sup>629</sup> Solomon Hanau, *Tsohar ha-tevah* (Dyhrenfurth: 1787), 7 (unpaginated). Zwiep, "Imagined Speech Communities", 115.

<sup>630</sup> *Reshimah mi-sefarim*, 50, octavo no. 366-367.

<sup>631</sup> Iris Parush; Saadya Sternberg, "Another Look at "The Life of 'Dead Hebrew'": Intentional Ignorance of Hebrew in Nineteenth-Century Eastern European Jewish Society," *Book History* 7.1 (2004), 171-214.

<sup>632</sup> Feiner, *Jewish Enlightenment*, 98-101, 157-158.

experts, such as Dubno, who tried to popularise it through their publications and teaching activity.

According to Parush and Sternberg, the teaching of the Pentateuch by way of literal translation from Hebrew into Yiddish could not replace the study of Hebrew grammar, since this method of teaching did not ensure that the Hebrew text would be properly understood. The *melameds* would convert Hebrew to Yiddish word by word, adhering to the original Hebrew syntax without attempting to adapt it so as to convey the actual meaning of the Hebrew text.<sup>633</sup> Moreover, the Pentateuch was generally studied in a fragmentary way, limited to a perusal of the beginning of each pericope, and the male population mainly studied the Talmud, much of which was written in Aramaic, and where the Hebrew style – succinct and inconsistent with the rules of Masoretic grammar -- differed considerably from the language of the Hebrew Bible. As Parush and Sternberg argue, this state of affairs effectively precluded all challenges to the rabbinical interpretation of the Hebrew text, while by contrast, the literary and educational activities of the maskilim aimed to democratise the Hebrew language and put the correct understanding of Scripture within everyone's reach. According to Parush and Sternberg, the popularisation of Hebrew during the Haskalah period amounted to a rebellion against the existing social order, and aimed to secularise Jewish society.<sup>634</sup> However, it needs to be stressed that, even if the process of secularisation might be true for the nineteenth century, it certainly does not apply to the early maskilim, whose activity, including works such as *Sefer netivot ha-shalom*, evolved around Jewish religious texts. Dubno's grammatical works were

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<sup>633</sup> Irene Zwiep, "Adding the Reader's Voice: Early-modern Ashkenazi Grammars of Hebrew," *Science in Context* 20.2 (2007), 163-195, 166.

<sup>634</sup> Parush; Sternberg, "The Life of 'Dead' Hebrew", 171-214.

never meant to challenge the existing order, but rather to complement the study of Hebrew and the Pentateuch. Furthermore, it could be argued that the rabbis' monopoly over the interpretation of religious texts was a consequence, not the reason for, the Jewish population's ignorance of grammar. It was the rabbis' resistance to the study of anything other than religious texts that prevented grammar – perceived as a secular science – from becoming a part of the Ashkenazi curriculum.<sup>635</sup> This attitude had been criticised by some early modern rabbinic authorities, including, for example, the Maharal of Prague, who advocated the study of grammar as a necessary tool for the correct understanding of Scripture.<sup>636</sup> In a short approbation for Joseph Heilbronn's *Em ha-yeled*, he stated that “Indeed, it is a great *mitsvah* when a man habitually teaches his son the holy tongue and its grammar, just as our ancient authorities used to do to.”<sup>637</sup> Isaac ben Samuel ha-Levi of Posen (1580 - c. 1646) in his *Sifah Yitshak* (Prague: 1628) similarly criticised the ignorance of Hebrew grammar he commonly encountered, blaming it primarily on the students' laziness rather than the lack of competent instruction in this highly technical subject:

“[They say that] grammar is a craft, not a matter of scholarship. But in truth, even according to what they say, it is a highly skilled craft, one that should be mastered just like every scholarly discipline, because it is the gateway

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<sup>635</sup> It is important to note that this state of affairs, although beneficial to the rabbinical elite, was not a product of a conscious policy or choice. See: Shaul Stampfer, “What Did ‘Knowing Hebrew’ Mean in Eastern Europe?”, *Hebrew in Ashkenaz*, 133.

<sup>636</sup> Aharon Kleinberger, *Ha-Maḥashavah ha-pedagogit shel ha-Maharal mi-Prag* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1962), 145-147.

<sup>637</sup> Joseph Heilbronn, *Em ha-yeled* (Prague: 1597), 2 (unpaginated).

“אמת ואמונה כי מצוה גדולה היא שירגיל האדם את בנו ללמדו לשון הקדש ובדקדוק הלשון כמו שעשו קדמונינו  
 ז”ל.”

to everything that is holy, and without it no man would ever raise his hand to write or open his mouth to speak the holy tongue correctly. But there are those who are too lazy to study the books of grammar, claiming that some of them are insufficiently detailed while others are too long and too difficult. In this regard, it is not enough for the lazy to apologise for preventing his eyes from seeing and his heart from understanding the words of wisdom that he must know.”<sup>638</sup>

Isaac ha-Levi criticises both rabbinic scholars and uneducated Jews for their unwillingness to engage with grammar, stressing that it is essential for arriving at the correct interpretation of Scripture. He complains that the field is undervalued, and expects his book to remedy the situation by prompting even the laziest of students to familiarise themselves with the rules of grammar. Evidently, however, he failed to achieve the anticipated result, as more than a hundred and fifty years later, Wessely was still expressing his frustration with the younger generation of Jews, whom he criticised for their disdain for grammar and lack of respect for the Hebrew language – the gateway to all branches of Torah study. In his approbation for *Sefer netivot ha-shalom* he wrote:

“They [the common people, *hamon*] think that it is easy to study Scripture and that every child and every fool can gain an insight into it. They do not

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<sup>638</sup> Isaac Halevi, *Siaḥ Yitṣṭhak* (Prague: 1627), 5a.

“(...) הלא ענין הדקדוק הוא במלאכה ואינה חכמה. ובאמת הן לו כדבריהם יהיה הרי היא מלאכת מחשבת מעשה חורש לחשוב לדעת ככל חכמה כי היא ראשונה לכל דבר שבקדושה ובלעדה לא ירים איש את ידו לכתוב ולא יפתח פיו לדבר בלשון הקדש על נכון. ויש אשר מתעצלים כלומר ספרי הדקדוק במאמרם כי קצתם אינם מספיקים כל הצורך וקצת הן באורך ורב הטורה יותר מדאי. ובכל אלה אין די למתעצל להתנצל על העלימו עיניו מראות ולבו מהבין אמרי בינה אשר הוא מוכרח לדעתה.”



believe that an expanded intellect and knowledge of the holy [Prov. 9:10] are required in order to understand what it says. They value it [Hebrew] so little, that they do not have a sense of the grammar of the language. They use interchangeably the past, present and future tense, the singular and the plural, the masculine and the feminine gender. When one tells them that grammar is the outer gate leading to the innermost Holy, and that he who abstains from [entering] it will not come into the Holy, they think that one is joking.”<sup>639</sup>

While some members of the rabbinical elite were sceptical about the study of grammar, as they perceived it as a possible distraction from Torah study, others appreciated this field of knowledge as a tool which may be used to deepen the understanding of Scripture and to enhance the appreciation of its modes of expression.<sup>640</sup> Dubno himself subscribed to the latter view, which was presumably shared by Ezekiel Landau who, despite his criticism of the *Biur*, called Dubno “a great grammarian” in his approbation for his Pentateuch edition, and by other rabbis who similarly expressed their approval of his *Tikun soferim* and his commentary on the Book of Genesis, which focused mainly on Hebrew grammatical issues.<sup>641</sup>

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<sup>639</sup> Wessely, “Mahalal Re'a”, GSJ, vol. 15.1, 8-9.

”נדמה להם כי נקל מאוד ללמוד מקרא, ולדעתם כל נער וכל חסר לב יוכל להבין בה, ולא יאמינו שצריך רוחב לב ודעת קדושים בינה לעמוד על דבריה, ותקטן עוד בעיניהם שלא יחושו אפילו לדקדוק הלשון, ויחליפו בין עבר להווה ועתיד, בין יחיד לרבים ובין זכר לנקבה, וכשיאמר להם כי הדקדוק שער החיצון לבא אל הקדש פנימה, ואשר ינזר מאחריו לא יבא אל הקדש, יהיה כמצחק בעיניהם (...).”

<sup>640</sup> See: Schatz, *Sprache in der Zerstreuung*, 82-90, 133-170.

<sup>641</sup> Kamenetsky, “Haskamot,” *Yeshurun* 9, 733-745.

## Dubno's views on Hebrew grammar

In a poem at the end of his *Birkat Yosef*, an essay on the Prophets and Writing sections of the Bible, Dubno asserts that ignorance of grammar prevents readers from understanding the Scripture properly. While the scribes of the past used to pay scrupulous attention to the vocalisation system, their contemporary successors have insufficient knowledge of the Masorah, and, consequently, the books they copy are not reliable:

“Those who are pure of heart (Psalms 73:1), even if they are accomplished Torah scholars, have paid no attention to the rules of grammar. Most of them are not aware that [Hebrew words] may be either full or deficient (Bava Batra 104a), for they have forgotten the [traditional annotations to the Scriptural text known as] the Masorah, which – on account of our indolence – elude us, rapidly taking flight like a young hart upon the mountains of Bether (Song of Songs 2:17).

Those who are of a faithful spirit (Proverbs 11:13), the elders of our nation who had received the Torah generation after generation, did turn their attention to the Masorah as well. They hastened to write the Prophets and the Writings with ink in a book or a scroll, carefully considering every full and every deficient word.

But now we toil in vain, for these [holy books] have lost both lover and friend (Psalms 88:19). Rather, all those who write them cannot see the

point of the distinction between full and deficient spelling. How can we place our hope in these [books] if our scribes are no longer able to write them correctly?!"<sup>642</sup>

The poem reveals Dubno's perception of the field of Hebrew grammar as primarily the study of the Masorah. Such a stance was at odds with the approach adopted by most Prussian maskilic grammarians, such as Joel Bril Loewe, Judah Loeb ben Ze'ev, Judah Neumark and Aaron Wolfsohn-Halle, which were influenced by ideas of the eighteenth-century Sprachwissenschaft, German linguistics pioneered for example by Christopher Adelung, advocating teaching grammatical rules instead of describing linguistic phenomena.<sup>643</sup> Since Mendelssohn referred to Adelung's work in his *Jerusalem*, he must have been aware of the new developments in Sprachwissenschaft and might have agreed with some of its ideas.<sup>644</sup> In comparison to the Prussian innovative way of teaching grammar, Dubno's method of study was deeply entrenched in tradition and was, probably, unappealing to Mendelssohn, who was an active participant of the German Enlightenment, and might explain his willingness to shorten Dubno's introduction to the *Biur* and his *Tikun soferim*. Their two different

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<sup>642</sup> Reproduced in: Kamenetsky, "Haskamot," *Yeshurun* 10, 775.

"ברי לבב אם בתורה חכמו/ על דרכי דקדוק עיניהם לא שמו/ נעלם מרבם הן חסר הן יתר/ כי גם המסורה מהם נשכחה/ מרוב עצלותנו מהר ברחה/ כעופר אילים על הרי בתר.

נאמני רוח זקני אמתנו/ שקבלו דור אחר דור תורתנו/ גם במסורה לבותם כוננו/ ונביאים וכתובים לכתוב מהרו/ על ספר בדיו וגלילה נזהרו/ כל מלא כל חסר במ התבוננו.

אך לעת כזאת לשוא נתיגע/ כי אבד מאלה אוהב ורע/ אפס כל כותב ספרי קודש אלו/ במלא או חסר אין במ תועלת/ איך נוהיל ונקוה עוד במ תוחלת/ אם כותביהם כדת בעם הדלו."

<sup>643</sup> Zwiep, "Imagined Speech Communities", 102. See also: pages 108-109.

<sup>644</sup> Moses Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem oder über religiöse Macht und Judentum* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2005), 19. This idea was suggested by Irene Zwiep in a private communication.

approaches, one traditional and one modern, had an effect on the final shape of the Biur, in which Mendelssohn gives a brief explanation of the rules of the Hebrew grammar in his *Or la-netivah*, while Dubno's scribal emendations are of descriptive nature.

Dubno's preoccupation with Hebrew grammar also emerges from his introduction to the Biur, of which only four pages are extant. Here, he discusses the importance of accents for the correct interpretation of the text, and illustrates his point with examples from the biblical text and rabbinical literature. He analyses the nature of human speech in general and the Hebrew language in particular. He states that it is impossible to pronounce words using only vowels or only consonants. Both are necessary for articulation, and the relation between them can be compared to the connection between the body and the soul. He emphasises that the ability to pronounce sounds does not suffice for successful communication. According to Dubno, to convey his message, the speaker must use his reason as he combines words into sentences and establishes the connections and separations between them in such a way as to produce a message that is not ambiguous. For example, the phrase *lo tokhal*, "you shall not eat", is ambiguous inasmuch as it refers to both the denial of food and the prohibition on eating. However, the very same words may denote permission to eat, as in answer to the question "Have you said that I should not eat?": one can say, *lo, tokhal* ("no, [you can] eat"). Thus, depending on punctuation, the same words can have two opposite meanings. In the verses "you shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal" (Exodus 20:13-15), the words *lo* ("not") are separated from the rest of the sentence with an upper accent (*ta'am e/yon*), and the two letters making them up are joined with an auxiliary accent

(*ta'am mesharet*). In the first negation, the auxiliary accent is a *merkha*,<sup>645</sup> and in the second and the third negation, a *munaḥ*.<sup>646</sup> Both *merkha* and *munaḥ* have to be accompanied by a *tifḥa*,<sup>647</sup> which can be used as a comma. Consequently, although the word *lo* is intended as nothing more than a negation, from the perspective of trope marks, it divides a sentence into two separate parts. Therefore, the verses could be understood as “don’t, murder”, “don’t, commit adultery”, “don’t, steal.” According to the Zohar (*Yitro*, section 2, 93b-94a), this ambiguity is necessary, as it allows the reader to understand the commandments as both a ban and a permission, because in certain circumstances, one is forced to kill or to steal, and the Torah allows for this possibility. Similarly, a man would not be allowed to have intercourse with his (barren) wife or after having already fulfilled the commandment to procreate, a judge would not be able to test a suspected false witness, and a student would not be allowed to “steal” knowledge from his teacher. By contrast, there is no *tifḥa* in “Do not bear false witness against your fellow man”, as one is not allowed to break this commandment under any circumstances. A *tifḥa* is also missing in “Do not covet”, because the commandment includes a specific list of items - a neighbour’s wife, his house, his donkey, his ox, and his belongings. All the things that do not belong into these categories are exempt from the prohibition.

Following the *Azharot* of Saadia Gaon, Rashi’s Bible commentary, and the Zohar, Dubno argues that, thanks to the cantillation marks, the Ten Commandments acquire a double meaning and can thus be linked to all the six

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<sup>645</sup> *Merkha* - a cantillation mark shaped like a comma. It denotes a short note.

<sup>646</sup> *Munaḥ* - a short note shaped like a right angle and placed below a given word.

<sup>647</sup> *Tifḥa* - cantillation mark shaped like a mirror image of a comma which denotes a short pause.

hundred and thirteen other commandments, which would otherwise negate them. The biblical accents are therefore of particular importance, as they point to the intended (flexible) meaning of Scripture. Still, in some cases, the message can be ambiguous, as in *Atah zeh beni Esav* (Gen. 27:25), which can mean both “Are you my son, Essau?” or “You are my son Essau?”. In this example it is the context, not the grammar, that serves to indicate the correct meaning.

Following his discourse on the Hebrew accents, Dubno distinguishes the four properties of speech that enable people to express their thoughts: the ability to pronounce consonants, the articulation of vowels, the combination of sounds into words and sentences, and the ability to separate them by means of intonation in order to convey the intended meaning. However, all these skills facilitate effective communication only between people who are in the physical presence of each other. They cannot be sure of transmitting a meaningful message to humans who are absent or to those who have not yet been born. For this reason, God blessed humanity with the gift of writing, which enables the communication of ideas to transcend the limitations of time and space.

According to Dubno, the ability to write depends on the same four conditions required for speaking a language. The consonants are rendered in the twenty-two letters of the alphabet. They can be divided into five groups: palatal, guttural, dental, sibilant, and labial. In addition, five consonants (*mem, nun, tsade, peh, khatf*) appear in two forms, of which one is reserved for use at the end of a word. Dubno evokes the opinions of the Sages regarding the origin of these final letters. According to the *Hiyya Bar Abba* (Megillah 2b-3°; Shabbat 104a), they

were prescribed by the prophets (*tsofim*, literally “watchmen”<sup>648</sup>). Dubno emphasises that other rabbis refute his hypothesis and suggest that the final letters have existed since the Law was received at Sinai, as the last sentence in the Book of Leviticus states: “These are the commandments which the Lord commanded Moses for the children of Israel in Mount Sinai” (Leviticus 27:34). Consequently, from that point onward, Scripture could not be modified, which precluded the introduction of any new letter forms. However, the rabbis believed that knowledge of the special final form of these five letters was forgotten in time, only to be eventually restored by the prophets.<sup>649</sup>

Dubno states there are three main vowels, *ḥolam*, *ḥirik*, and *pataḥ*,<sup>650</sup> from which stem four other vowels: *kamats*, *shuruk* (also known as *melafum*), *tsere* and *segol*.<sup>651</sup> To remember them easily, Dubno recommends using a mnemonic phrase “son of the Rabbi Yoel of Dubno” (*ben rav Yoel mi-Dubno*). The seven vowels were mentioned by Yehuda bar David Ma’aravi (tenth century) and by

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<sup>648</sup> The word *tsofim* here is a part of a word play. In the Gemara the final letters are not cited in the correct alphabetical order but rather as *mem*, *nun*, *tsadi*, *peh*, *khaf*, which can be read as an acronymic allusion to the words *min tsofim* (“from watchmen”). GSJ, vol. 20.1, 474; Judith Z. Abrams, *The Talmud for Beginners: Text* (Northvale, New Jersey; London: Jason Aronson, 1993), 12-13.

<sup>649</sup> Abrams, *The Talmud for Beginners*, 12.

<sup>650</sup> *Ḥolam* - a vowel sign denoting the phoneme “o”, which is represented by a dot above the upper left corner of a letter.

*Ḥirik* - a vowel sign denoting the phoneme “i”, which is represented either by a dot under any consonantal letter (*ḥirik katan*) or by a dot followed by the letter *yud* (*ḥirik gadol*).

*Pataḥ* - a vowel sign denoting the phoneme “a”, which is represented by a horizontal line under a letter.

<sup>651</sup> *Kamats* - a vowel sign shaped like a capital “t”, which is placed under a letter. In a closed syllable, it denotes the phoneme “o” (*kamats katan*). In an open syllable, it denotes the phoneme “a” (*kamats gadol*).

*Shuruk* - a vowel sign denoting the phoneme “u” which is represented by a dot in the middle and to the left of the letter *vav*.

*Tsere* - a sign denoting the long vowel “e”, which is represented by two horizontal dots under a letter.

*Segol* - a sign denoting the short vowel “e” which is represented by three dots forming an upside-down triangle under a letter.

Yehuda Halevi in *Sefer Kuzari*, as well as by Abraham ibn Ezra, who called them “seven kings” in *Tsaḥot*. These scholars did not distinguish between *ḥirik katan* and *ḥirik gadol*, *kamats katan* and *kamats gadol*, and did not regard the *kubuts*<sup>652</sup> as a separate vowel but considered it a special case of the *melafum* lacking the letter *vav*. As Dubno explains, if the dot, which normally stands within the letter *vav* in the *kubuts*, was to be left standing between two consonants, it could easily be confused with the letter *yud*. If it was to be placed above or below the consonant, it would look like a *ḥirik* or a *ḥolam*. Therefore, it is placed under a given consonant aligned diagonally with two additional dots. Dubno also evokes the opinion of David Kimhi, who in his *Mikhlol* divided Hebrew vowels into five long and five short ones, excluding the *sheva*,<sup>653</sup> which is not pronounced, and distinguishing between the resting *sheva*, which appears only in connection to the preceding consonant, and the mobile *sheva*, which connects to the following consonant. In summary, Dubno states, in the Hebrew writing system, one can distinguish nine shapes for ten sounds (the tenth being the *sheva*).

Drawing inspiration from the Zohar, Dubno points out that the Hebrew word for vowel (*tenu'ah*) can also denote movement, which refers to the power of the vowels to bring the consonants into movement, just as the soul can cause the body to move. Moreover, unlike the consonants, the vowels do not feature as full blown letters but are represented by the barely visible vocalising lines and dots. This, he says, is comparable to the capacity of the invisible soul to bring to life

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<sup>652</sup> *Kubuts* - a vowel sign denoting the phoneme “u” which is represented by three dots forming a diagonal line under a letter.

<sup>653</sup> *Sheva* - a vowel sign which is mute or which denotes the phoneme “e”, represented by two vertical dots under a letter.



the fully visible body.<sup>654</sup> By contrast, other languages depict the vowel sounds as self-standing letters.<sup>655</sup>

A number of scholars have argued that Mendelssohn was the source of most of the ideas about the Hebrew language that were expressed in Dubno's *Alim li-terufah*.<sup>656</sup> However, a comparison of Mendelssohn's *Or la-netivah* with Dubno's introduction, which Mendelssohn had discarded, reveals many similarities.<sup>657</sup> A number of passages in Mendelssohn's essay were clearly inspired by or even copied word-for-word from Dubno's work. For example, Dubno refers to the number of languages spoken by Noah's descendants, claiming that they are mentioned in the *Pesikta de-rav Kahana*.<sup>658</sup> However, there is no such reference in this particular *midrash*, and it appears that Dubno must have made a mistake.<sup>659</sup> Interestingly, the same erroneous claim appears in *Or la-netivah*, and it seems that Mendelssohn must have copied it verbatim, without checking its accuracy, from Dubno's introduction, which had already been written and was available to him at the time when he was working on his *Or la-netivah*:

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<sup>654</sup> See: Zohar, Bereshit, section 3:14 - "And they who are wise shall shine (Daniel 12:3), like the cantillation marks that the letters and the vowels follow. They move along like soldiers following their king. The letters are the body and the vowels are the aspect of their spirit, and they all follow their intonations and attain their existence. When the tune of the cantillation marks travels along, the letters and the vowels march in step with it. When the tune stops, they stop as well." Translation from: *The Zohar* (New York: The Kabbalah Centre International Inc., 2003), vol. 1, 160.

<sup>655</sup> Dubno's introduction was cut in the middle of the sentence. For that reason, it is not known what his interpretation of this fact was.

<sup>656</sup> For a discussion of this subject, see "The authorship of *Alim li-terufah*" in the chapter "Dubno and the publication of the Biur."

<sup>657</sup> Dubno's introduction was probably rejected due to its length and focus on grammar. See the chapter "Dubno and the publication of the Biur."

<sup>658</sup> GSJ, vol. 20.1, 335; Dubno, "Hakdamah", 15.

<sup>659</sup> See: GSJ, vol. 20.1, 472, n. 37.

“Our Sages, may their memory be blessed, divided them into seventy languages corresponding to the number of the descendants of Shem, Ham, and Japheth at that time, who were each numbered in the *Pesikta de-rav Kahana* as follows: fourteen [descendants] for Yafet, thirty for Cham, twenty-six for Shem, and in the case of the descendants of Ham, [the author of the *midrash*] omitted the Assyrians and the Philistines, because both of them descended from others who had already been counted.”<sup>660</sup>

In another paragraph, Dubno provides examples of the etymology of various biblical names which lose their meaning in foreign translations and can therefore serve as proof that the Pentateuch was composed in Hebrew:

“We see that the Torah explains the original etymology [of names]: “Adam” comes from “soil” [*adamah*, Gen. 3:19], “Eve” from “mother of all living” [*em kol hai*, Gen. 3:20], “Kain” from “I created” [*kanitj*, Gen. 4:1], “Seth” from “[God] appointed me” [*shat li*, Gen. 4:25], “Noah” from “this will comfort us” [*zeh yenamenu*, Gen. 5:29], “Peleg” from “in his day [the earth] was divided” [*ki be-yamav niflegah*, Gen. 10: 25]. And even though these stories have been translated into all the languages of the Gentiles, we can see that the above-mentioned names were not changed but kept their original form in the holy tongue: Adam, Kain, Noah etc. In their

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<sup>660</sup> Dubno, “Hakdamah”, 15; Mendelssohn, “Or la-netivah”, 216;

“וזהו”ל חלקום לעי לשונות, כפי מה שמצאו מספר בני שם וחם ויפת בעת ההיא, וכן נמנו בפסיקתא דרב כהנא אחד לאחד י”ד ליפת, ל’ לחם, כ”ו לשם, ובבני חם דלג אשור ופלשתים, כי שני אלה יצאו מזולתם אשר כבר נחשבו (...).”

languages they will not encounter the etymologies that appear in these stories, because they are too distant from them, and that is a powerful demonstration and reliable evidence for all the nations that these names originate in the holy tongue.”<sup>661</sup>

It seems that Mendelssohn used this excerpt when composing his own introduction to *Sefer netivot ha-shalom, Or la-netivah*. The following passage is strikingly similar to the above-quoted passage from Dubno’s essay:

“And we see that the Torah explains the etymology of proper nouns: “Adam” comes from “soil” (“soil” [*adamah*] is named after the colour which travellers in that climate say is red), “Eve” from “mother of all living”, and so on with “Kain”, “Seth”, “Abel”, “Noah” and “Peleg.” The etymology of all of them can be explained only in the holy tongue, in which such word plays are possible. And in all the languages into which the stories from the Torah were translated, the names were preserved exactly in their original form in the holy tongue: Adam, Kain, Eve etc., and their etymology is not apparent from the text. This is a powerful demonstration and reliable evidence that they originate in the holy tongue.”<sup>662</sup>

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<sup>661</sup> Dubno, “Hakdamah”, 15.

“...”) וראינו שהתורה נתנה סבה אל ראשית הנחתם, אדם מן האדמה, חוה מאם כל חי, קין מקניתי, שת משת לי, נח מן זה ינחמנו, פלג מן כי בימיו נפלגה, ועם שנעתקו הספורים ההם לכל לשונות הגוים, עינינו רואות כי השמות הנזכרים עצמם לא נשתנו, אבל הובאו אצל העמים כולם בלשון הקדש ממש אדם קין נח ודומיהם, ובלשונותיהם לא יפלו עוד על השרשים שבספורים ההם, כי רחוקים המה מהם, וזאת היא הוראה עצומה ועדות נאמנה מכל הגוים על היות ראשית הנחתם בלשון הקדש.”

<sup>662</sup> Mendelssohn, “Or la-netivah”, GSJ, vol. 14, 215

“וראינו שהתורה נתנה סבה אל הנחת שמות העצם, אדם מן אדמה, (אדמה על שם הצבע, שהאדמה אשר באקלם ההוא אמרו עליו בעלי המסעות שהוא אדום), חוה מן אם כל חי, וכן קין שת והבל נח ופלג, כלם סיבת הנחתם מבוארת ולא תתכן כי אם בלה”ק, שבו הלשון נופל על לשון. ובכל הלשונות אשר אליהם נעתק ספורי התורה נשארו

There are other similarities. Mendelssohn refers to the same examples of word play that were adduced by Dubno, such as a “copper snake” (*nehash nehoshet*), to the same passage from Bereshit Rabba about the different words for ‘woman’ in various languages, and to the same passage from the *Akedat Yitshak* by Isaac Arama.<sup>663</sup> Unfortunately, since only an excerpt from Dubno’s introduction has been preserved, it is not possible to estimate to what extent Mendelssohn’s *Or la-netivah* was inspired by Dubno’s work. Mendelssohn copied excerpts from Dubno’s work most probably because he considered traditional formulations employed by Dubno as appropriate style for an introduction to the Biur. Thus, Mendelssohn’s *Or la-netivah* can serve as an example of work which includes both maskilic German and Eastern-European elements. Since Mendelssohn was a follower not only of the Haskalah, but also of the German Enlightenment, he was influenced by European philosophers in his views of the origin of human speech. However, such beliefs would not have been appropriate for an introductory essay to the Pentateuch edition intended for religious Jews. In writing his introduction, Mendelssohn seemed to have kept in mind Dubno’s work, with its traditional recapitulation of the history of the Hebrew language, and it can be assumed that *Or la-netivah* would have looked differently if Dubno had not composed his *Alim li-terufah*.

Dubno’s focus on grammar and his insistence on including as much information related to the Masoretic punctuation as possible might have been at

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השמות ההם בלשון הקודש ממש אדם קין חוה ודומיהם, ובהם אין סבת ההנחה נכרת מתוך הלשון, וזאת היא ראייה עצומה ועדות נאמנה על היות ראשית הנחתם בלה"ק.

<sup>663</sup> Compare: Moses Mendelssohn, “Or la-netivah”, 214-216, and Solomon Dubno, “Hakdamah”, GSJ, vol. 15.1, 15-16.

odds with Mendelssohn's vision of *Sefer netivot ha-shalom*, which was meant to be accessible to an average Jewish reader. While *Tikun soferim* and part of the Hebrew commentary related to grammar might have been unintelligible to non-experts, Dubno's introduction was an attempt to explain the basics of the Masoretic punctuation and its importance for the interpretation of the Scripture. In this way, Dubno wished to turn the Masorah into a common tool in service of the Torah study.

### **The status of the Hebrew language in the maskilic community**

Dubno's attitude towards the Hebrew language renewal can be surmised from the note that he left in his copy of Mendelssohn's *Kohelet musar*, where he mentioned its moral and aesthetic goals:

“This booklet was composed by two men who are proficient in the Torah, God fearing and honest, the famous sage, our teacher Moses Dessau, may the Merciful save him, and his friend, the excellent sage Rabbi Tuviah, may his memory be blessed. This was in the days of their youth. Their intention was to wake up the sleepers and to rouse the dozers from their hibernation and long sleep, so as to accustom them to moral instruction

and to improve their character, as well as to excite their hearts with the beauty of *melitsah*<sup>664</sup> in the holy tongue.”<sup>665</sup>

While the study of Hebrew -- with the exception of a narrow scholarly elite -- was neglected by the majority of Jews, whose use of the language was limited to basic religious requirements, the early maskilim aimed at achieving the mastery and expand the scope of Hebrew usage. In Prussia, the language was expected to spread Enlightenment values, and to crystallise a unified maskilic identity that could be shared by educated Jews in different parts of Europe.<sup>666</sup> Hebrew-German *diglossia* (a situation in which two languages are used in different circumstances by the same speakers) was a desired state for the Prussian maskilim, and *Sefer netivot ha-shalom* partly served to enhance this type of bilingualism. While Hebrew was intended for internal use as a literary language and the holy tongue of Scripture, a fluent command of German was

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<sup>664</sup> *Melitsah* - a style of writing which consists of a mosaic of biblical phrases, which originated in the Middle Ages. Moshe Pelli describes maskilic *melitsah* as “high-flown figures of speech” or “euphuism,” while emphasising that the term lacks a clear definition. Maskilim used it as a synonym for poetry, or an elaborate, poetic idiom, or simply to denote writing in pure Hebrew and correct grammar. See: Moshe Pelli, “On the Role of Melitzah in the Literature of Hebrew Enlightenment”, *Hebrew in Ashkenaz*, 102; Eisig Silberschlag, *From Renaissance to Renaissance* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1973), vol. 1, 99; Yahil Zaban, “‘Folded White Napkins’: The Etiquette Discourse in Haskalah Literature”, *Prooftexts* 35.2-3 (Spring-Fall 2015), 296; Irene Zwiep, “An Echo of Lofty Mountains: David Franco Mendes, a European Intellectual”, *Studia Rosenthaliana* 35.2 (2001), 292.

<sup>665</sup> Moses Mendelssohn, *Kohelet musar* (Berlin: 1750?), British Library, item no. BLL01014639632, 1.

”הקונטרס הזה חברו שני אנשים מופלגים בתורה, יראי השם, אנשי אמת, ה”ה החכם המפורסם מוהר”ר משה דעסא נר”ו, וחברו החכם המופלג מוהר”ר טובי”א, והי’ זה בימי בחורותיהם, והיתה כוונתם בזה לעורר הישנים ולהקיץ הנרדמים מתרדמת ושנת הזמן, ולהרגילם בדברי מוסר בתקון מדותיהם, גם ולהלהיב הלבבות ביופי מליצת לשון הקודש (...).”

<sup>666</sup> Yaacov Shavit, “A Duty Too Heavy to Bear: Hebrew in the Berlin Haskalah, 1783-1819: Between Classic, Modern, and Romantic,” in: Lewis Glinert (ed.), *Hebrew in Ashkenaz: a Language in Exile* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 111-128.

meant to replace Yiddish as the vernacular language of German Jewry. This would raise the status of Jews in Gentile society.<sup>667</sup>

While Dubno shared the desire for the cultivation of Hebrew with other maskilim of his time, his idea for the scope of its usage seems to be less broad and revolutionary. Dubno's praise of Mendelssohn's attempts at exciting "hearts with the beauty of *melitsah* in the holy tongue" can serve as an indication of his attitude towards the Hebrew renewal. He regarded Hebrew as a sacred and, therefore, immutable language, which was fit for writing poetic verses. He himself composed poems and commentaries in biblical language and in this way evoked the ancient and rabbinical heritage of Hebrew literature. However, although this high and often ornamental style was appropriate for poetry and religious treatises, it was unsuitable for writing about common matters that would be of interest to many Jewish readers. While Dubno expressed an opinion that Hebrew literature should be preferably as "pure" as possible, which implied avoiding the usage of foreign loanword and non-biblical vocabulary,<sup>668</sup> he did not support the idea of Hebrew renewal in the maskilic sense, as it involved transforming the biblical language through the inclusion of new vocabulary. Therefore, Dubno's commitment to purity and correctness prevented him from treating Hebrew as a potentially modern and dynamic language. According to Andrea Schatz, attempts at preserving 'pure' biblical Hebrew as a means of expression were gradually abandoned in favour of a less rigid approach and enriching Hebrew with new vocabulary, which enabled authors working in Hebrew to write about contemporary subjects in a more accessible way. Dubno's conservative stance

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<sup>667</sup> Ibid.; Schatz, *Sprache in der Zerstreung* 17-19.

<sup>668</sup> Dubno, "Haskamah" in Heidenheim, *Sefer kerovot*, 5a.

regarding the purity of Hebrew was at odds with the approach of those maskilim who were interested in transforming Hebrew into a modern, full-fledged language that would enable as fluent communication as in Yiddish at that time.<sup>669</sup>

The Hebrew language renewal was paralleled by the development of literature written in other national languages, such as High German, which was to replace French and Latin as the languages of culture in German lands. In the eighteenth century, the complexity of grammar and the amount of foreign vocabulary in a language were thought to be an indication of the intellectual potential of its users. Consequently, Yiddish and rabbinic Hebrew were viewed by the maskilim, including Dubno, as corrupt languages, because they included a large number of loanwords and were often grammatically incorrect. For this reason, they were believed to reflect the imperfection of their speakers and should be replaced by “pure” languages such as biblical Hebrew or High German.<sup>670</sup> However, while the maskilim managed to create poetry in biblical Hebrew, they could not find in it the vocabulary they needed for scientific discourse and the expression of speculative thought. For this reason, many of them resorted to medieval Hebrew in their scientific, philosophical and theological works.<sup>671</sup>

The view that the political situation of the Jews was reflected in the level of their proficiency in Hebrew has a long history in the Jewish literary tradition, and was taken up by some of the maskilim. According to this idea, so long as

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<sup>669</sup> Schatz, *Sprache in der Zerstreung*, 17-19, 272.

<sup>670</sup> Shavit, "A Duty Too Heavy to Bear", 118; Solomon Dubno's *haskamah* in: Heidenheim, *Sefer kerovot*, 4a-6b.

<sup>671</sup> Pelli, "On the Role of Melitzah", 82.



Hebrew was their language of common use, the Jewish people thrived.<sup>672</sup> In *Alim li-terufah*, Dubno similarly idealises the times when Hebrew was the only spoken language of the Jewish people:

“In olden days, when God was with us, resting on our tents, when his light shone upon our heads, when we lived securely and peacefully on the land of our fathers, tribe by tribe, family by family, each in his own estate, in the days of the first temple our holy tongue, too, found its home, and the language of the Hebrews built its nest in that land. For it was the language of the chosen people ever since they became a nation.”<sup>673</sup>

This glorification of the Hebrew language was accompanied by the promotion of Hebrew literature in Jewish society. But despite the efforts of the Berlin maskilim, the language was read only by a tiny fraction of the German Jewish population. For example, *Ha-Me’asef*, the Hebrew flagship publication of the German Haskalah, had a mere two to three hundred subscribers.<sup>674</sup> Given that Friedländer’s German prayer-book was sold in seven hundred and fifty copies, it seems that translations from Hebrew might have been more popular.<sup>675</sup> The number of readers of maskilic literature in Hebrew may well have been as small as this because few Jews had truly mastered the language.

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<sup>672</sup> This view was expressed, for example, by Yehuda Halevi, Profiat Duran, and by Dubno’s near-contemporary, Israel Zamość. Schatz, *Sprache in der Zerstreuung*, 116.

<sup>673</sup> GSJ, vol. 14, 323.

“לפנים בסוד אלוה עלי אהלנו בהלו נרו על ראשנו בהיותינו שקטים ושננים על נחלת אבותינו. שבט ושבט משפחה ומשפחה. איש על אחותו. בימי הבית הראשון גם לשוננו הקדושה מצאה בית ושפת עברי קן לה בארץ ההיא. כי היא היתה שפת האומה הנבחרת מאז היתה לגוי.”

<sup>674</sup> Tsemah Tsamriyon, *Ha-me’asef: ketav ha-et ha-moderni ha-rishon be-ivrit* (Tel Aviv: 1988), 47; Shavit, “A Duty Too Heavy to Bear”, 114.

<sup>675</sup> Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995), 25.

While the Biur combined the two approaches to learning Hebrew, translation into German on the one hand and study of Hebrew grammar on the other, it seems that Mendelssohn envisaged the German translation as the main tool of instruction. Dubno's scribal emendations and the grammatical contents of his introduction were, in Mendelssohn's opinion, of marginal importance. He abridged or removed them altogether from the published version of the Biur on the grounds that they were too technical and thus too difficult for his target audience.<sup>676</sup> Dubno, on the other hand, began his work on the Biur while ascribing an important role to both the German translation of the original Hebrew text and to the explanation of the rules of Hebrew grammar, but by the time of his withdrawal from the project he had clearly changed his mind, focusing exclusively on Hebrew grammar and rejecting modern translations. He believed that it was perfectly possible to achieve mastery of the text without recourse to any modern translation.

### **Enlightenment thinkers' views on language**

The early modern period saw a proliferation of research on cognitive and social linguistics, reinforced during the period of the Enlightenment by the rediscovery of the naturalistic language theory articulated in antiquity by Epicurus (341 BC –270 BC) in his *Letter to Herodotus*, and by Lucretius (99 BC – c. 55 BC) in *De rerum natura*.<sup>677</sup> Both philosophers had advocated the view that human speech evolved over time from primitive to a gradually more sophisticated form.

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<sup>676</sup> For discussion of Mendelssohn's attitude towards the study of grammar and Dubno's work, see pages 131-132.

<sup>677</sup> Lifschitz, *Language and Enlightenment*, 19-21.

Consequently, one of the main tasks of all linguistics theoreticians was to reconstruct the way in which language was transformed from a series of primitive, animal-like cries to a sophisticated system of grammar and vocabulary.<sup>678</sup>

Judging from the list of Mendelssohn's books, he must have been well-acquainted with the stances of different Enlightenment philosophers. Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) and Charles de Brosses (1709-1777) believed that human speech developed gradually over time. While de Brosses thought the key to development of speech was the imitation of sounds that could be observed in nature,<sup>679</sup> Rousseau claimed that language evolved as a result of interaction with fellow humans. He was unique in his perception of language as a negative consequence of human civilisation. In his opinion, at birth, all human beings were able to communicate in a natural language, common to all men, such as the cries of small children who, as they grow up, lose the ability to express themselves in this direct, innocent manner. Consequently, he considered human speech to be unreliable as a means of conveying emotions and thoughts; it separated man from nature and moral instinct, replacing them with the social contract.<sup>680</sup> In contrast to de Brosses and Rousseau, Herder believed that the use of language involved a particular manner of perceiving and understanding the world that could not have evolved over time from a less complex way of thinking but must have been inherent in humans from the very outset. Therefore, a full-fledged language could not have been developed from more primitive forms of expression, such as

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<sup>678</sup> Ibid. 1-2.

<sup>679</sup> Charles de Brosses, *Traité de la formation mécanique des langues et des principes physiques de l'étymologie* (Paris: Saillant, 1765)

<sup>680</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* (Amsterdam: Marc Michel Rey, 1762), 38-47. Jean Starobinski, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau, la transparence et l'obstacle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), 356-379.

animal cries. He believed that the ability to speak was innate and did not depend on the influence of society.<sup>681</sup>

In an unpublished work, *Notizen zu Ursprung der Sprache*, Mendelssohn argued, just as Herder, that humans had an innate language instinct. In his opinion, in contrast to animals, man possessed an inborn desire to convey meaning and attach it to the sounds he emits. Mendelssohn must have been influenced by Rousseau, whose *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* he translated into German, as he believed that the ability to use a language had to be developed by social circumstances,<sup>682</sup> and, for that reason, feral children, who were an object of fascination during the Enlightenment period, would not be able to communicate by means of speech.<sup>683</sup> While Rousseau struggled to trace the evolution from the first, 'natural' human speech to an arbitrary, symbolic language, Mendelssohn noted that animals tend to communicate by means of sound, and the transition to full-fledge language could take place thanks to human imagination, reason and tendency for self-perfection. Following Locke, Mendelssohn believed that, while human speech did not emerge due to divine inspiration, the will to communicate through speech might have been the result of God's influence.<sup>684</sup> He also seems to have adopted

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<sup>681</sup> Ibid.; Lifschitz, *Language and Enlightenment*, 185-186.

<sup>682</sup> Moses Mendelssohn, "Notizen zu Ursprung der Sprache", GSJ, vol. 6.2, 25-28; Ulrich Ricken, "Mendelssohn und die Sprachtheorien der Aufklärung" in: Michael Albrecht, Eva J. Engel (eds), *Moses Mendelssohn in Spannungsfeld der Aufklärung* (Stuttgart-Bad Canasta: Frommann-Holzboog, 2000), 195-241; Avi Lifschitz, "Language as Means and an Obstacle to Freedom: The Case of Moses Mendelssohn" in: Quentin Skinner, Martin van Gelderen (eds), *Freedom and the Construction of Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Schorch, *Moses Mendelssohns Sprachpolitik*, 91.

<sup>683</sup> Lifschitz, *Language and Enlightenment*, 75-76; Aldo D. Scaglione, "Direct vs. Inverted Order: Wolff and Condillac on the Necessity of the Sign and the Interrelationship of Language and Thinking," *Romance Philology* 33.4 (1980), 498-499.

<sup>684</sup> Schatz, *Die Sprache in der Zerstreuung*, 216-217, 223-225.

the onomatopoeic theory of the origin of language, advocated by de Brosses, and develop it further by suggesting that speech could become more conventional over time thanks to the natural human capacity for the association of ideas.<sup>685</sup> It is important to note the distinction that Mendelssohn applied between Hebrew and all other languages. In *Or la-netivah*, he asserted that Hebrew was of divine origin and remained unchanged throughout the biblical period -- a statement which he supported by pointing out that the same proper names appear in different parts of the Torah.<sup>686</sup>

Mendelssohn believed language to be capable of adequately reflecting sensory experience. However, one could refer to the transcendental realm only by means of metaphors. Since he believed thoughts to depend on the nature of language, he regarded it as an explanation for mistaking ideas for facts by philosophers, who, while speculating on a certain matter, would tend to forget the metaphorical character of their language and, consequently, their thoughts. The Scripture was exceptional in this aspect, as it conveyed the message of the revelation through the language of action, in which spoken word is complemented by body language and intonation. That prevents misunderstanding and renders the message unambiguous. The language of action is partially preserved in the Scripture through the system of punctuation and accentuation. Thanks to the cantillation marks, the biblical language maintains the intended prosody of the text, thus remaining close to the inner speech – thought.<sup>687</sup> The oral nature of language led Mendelssohn to believe that the study of written Hebrew should be

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<sup>685</sup> Moses Mendelssohn, *Sendschreiben an den Herrn Magister Lessing in Leipzig* (1756), GSJ, vol. 2, 104-109.

<sup>686</sup> GSJ, vol. 14, 213-217.

<sup>687</sup> Gideon Freudenthal, *No Religion without Idolatry: Mendelssohn's Jewish Enlightenment* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012), 89-104.

paired with listening to it as a spoken language. This would be possible because the pronunciation rules of Hebrew have been transmitted reliably from the ancient Israelites through to the Jews of eighteenth-century Europe. The inadequate *melameds*, who neglected the spoken word, broke the long tradition of study that enabled Hebrew to remain a living language for centuries.<sup>688</sup>

While Dubno was probably unfamiliar with most of the writings discussed above, in his introduction to the *Biur*, he touches on the same subjects as other scholars of his time, such as the origin of human speech and the relation between language and the mind. Since he tended to avoid reading Gentile works, he might have gained some knowledge of these topics by word-of-mouth, e.g., during his visits to Mendelssohn's salon or while debating the nature of language with fellow scholars who had been more exposed to non-Jewish texts. One can cautiously assume that, during their cooperation on the publication of *Sefer netivot ha-shalom*, Mendelssohn, who was well-read in non-Jewish biblical scholarship, might have discussed these theories of linguistics with Dubno, who was originally responsible for writing the introduction to the work. While Dubno must have been aware of non-Jewish scholars' views on the subject, he does not mention them directly in his writings. This was by no means unique. Many maskilic authors would not give credit to Gentile biblical scholarship in their writings for fear of arousing the hostility of other followers of the early Haskalah.<sup>689</sup> Even Mendelssohn avoided referring to non-Jewish scholars in his *Or la-netivah*,

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<sup>688</sup> GSJ, vol. 14, 218.

<sup>689</sup> Moshe Pelli, "These are the words of the great pundit, scholar and poet Herder...": Herder and the Hebrew Haskalah" in: Christoph Schulte (ed.), *Hebräische Poesie und jüdischer Volksgeist: die Wirkungsgeschichte von Johann Gottfried Herder im Judentum Mittel- und Osteuropas* (Hildesheim; Zürich; New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 2003), 114.

although some of his work must have been inspired by Robert Lowth (1710-1787), who suggested that biblical poetry was characterised by parallelism as a result of being sung by two choirs taking turns in singing the liturgical verses, a theory which appears in Mendelssohn's commentary (Numbers 27, 17) without any references. Similarly, in his commentary on Genesis 4:23,<sup>690</sup> Mendelssohn referred to an interpretation of the speech of Lamech by an anonymous Gentile author who has been identified by Segal as Herder.<sup>691</sup>

### **Dubno's belief in the divine nature of Hebrew**

Although only four pages of Dubno's original introduction were printed in *Sefer netivot ha-shalom*, they can give us an insight into Dubno's views regarding the Hebrew language.<sup>692</sup> In his opinion, Hebrew was the language of the Torah and creation,<sup>693</sup> it was the first language of mankind and all other languages are its descendants.<sup>694</sup> While many non-Jewish scholars hesitated as to whether the origin of Hebrew was natural or divine, Dubno makes his stance clear from the beginning by retelling the Genesis creation story in full compliance with the traditional understanding of Judaism as a revelation-based religion. Since the revelation at Sinai was conveyed in Hebrew, to ascribe to the language a natural

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<sup>690</sup> Ibid.; Sandler, *Ha-Be'ur*, 103.

<sup>691</sup> Moshe Segal, "Le-ḥeker tsuratah shel ha-shirah ha-mikra'it", *Sefer Klozner*, 99. Compare: Herder, *Vom Geist der ebräischen Poesie*, 344.

<sup>692</sup> GSJ, vol. 15.1, 15-18; GSJ, vol. 20, 334-343. A few additional excerpts were published in *Ha-Karmel* by Samuel Joseph Fuenn. The manuscript of Dubno's introduction was listed in his book catalogue of 1814, but it is unknown what had happened to it afterwards.

<sup>693</sup> Dubno, *Hakdamah*", 15.

"ניתנה תורה בלשון הקדש כך נברא העולם בלשון הקדש."

<sup>694</sup> Ibid.

"וזאת היא הוראה עצומה ועדות נאמנה מכל הגוים על היות ראשית הנחתם שלשון הקודש."

origin would amount to denying the divine origin of the Torah.<sup>695</sup> Since Dubno states that Hebrew was the first language, spoken by Adam, this study assumes that when he refers to the first speech (*dibur*), he has the Hebrew language in mind.

Dubno starts his essay by stating that speech was given to humans by God together with reason, in order to enable them to express their thoughts and knowledge. This assumption is compatible with the commonly held view whereby the abilities to reason and to speak were co-dependent, a view reflected, for example, in the literature of medieval Jewish philosophy, where the term *medaber*, literally ‘speaker’, is often used in reference to man as a class of creation uniquely endowed with the faculty of reason:<sup>696</sup>

“Let God be blessed and the Creator be praised, who is good and kind to His creations, [giving] to each and every one of them as much as they deserve to receive, who has chosen man out of all the living creatures that inhabit the Earth, and endowed him with reason from high, providing him with the faculty of speech in order that he would express his thought and knowledge in an articulate manner.”<sup>697</sup>

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<sup>695</sup> See Idel’s general remark on medieval Jewish philosophy of language in: Moshe Idel, *Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abraham Abulafia* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 11.

<sup>696</sup> Marvin Fox, *Interpreting Maimonides. Studies in Methodology, Metaphysics, and Moral Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 52-53; Eliezer Schweid, *The Classic Jewish Philosophers: From Saadia Through the Renaissance* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 180, n. 3.

<sup>697</sup> Dubno, “Hakdamah”, 15.

“יתברך האל וישתבח הבורא הטוב ומטיב לנבראיו, לכל אחד כשעור הראוי לו לקבלו, והבוחר באדם מכל החי אשר על פני האדמה, ויחננו בהשפיעו לו השכל ממרומים, והמציא לו חכמת הדבור, להוציא מחשבתו והשכלתו אל פועל הבטוי וההברה.”



By pairing the Hebrew language with reason, Dubno suggests that, by its very nature, Hebrew is the most rational of all the world's languages. Echoing Talmudic and medieval scholars, he also shows that the capacity of Hebrew to reflect the true nature of things is owed to Adam who, thanks to his wisdom, named all the living creatures in accordance with their innate characteristics.<sup>698</sup> Consequently, every name constituted a correct definition of an animal and pointed to the traits that distinguished it from other species:

“Speech was granted by God to the first man, as is explained in the verse *And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field etc.* (Genesis 2:19-20). He possessed the wondrous wisdom of knowing the history of all the beasts, cattle and birds, their character and nature, how to distinguish them from one another and how to define them by name. This is because a name is a true definition of a thing, and it shows how it differs from every other thing, be it a person, a species, or a genus.”<sup>699</sup>

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<sup>698</sup> This view was expressed for example by Profiat Duran and Abraham ibn Ezra. Irene E. Zwiep, *Mother of Reason and Revelation. A Short History of Medieval Jewish Linguistic Thought* (Amsterdam: Gieben, 1997), 142-149, 153-156.

<sup>699</sup> Dubno, “Hakdamah”, 15.

“והדבור הזה חנן אותו לאדם הראשון כמבואר בכתוב, ויצר ה' אלהים מן האדמה כל חית השדה ואת כל עוף השמים ויבא אל האדם לראות מה יקרא לו וכל אשר יקרא לו האדם נפש חיה הוא שמו, ויקרא האדם שמות לכל הבהמה ולעוף השמים ולכל חית הארץ וגו' (בראשית ב' י"ט וכו'), והיא חכמה נפלאה לו לדעת תולדת כל החיות והבהמות והעופות, ומזגם וטבעם, והבדליהם זה מזה, לגדרם בשמות, כי השם הוא גדר הדבר באמת, ומורה על הבדלו משאר הדבר, אם באיש או במין או בסוג.”

Hebrew was not only the first language and the only language of divine origin. It was also the most perfect language and the only human speech that correctly depicted the world, while other languages, created by mankind, were mere distortions of reality.<sup>700</sup>

In the next paragraph, Dubno refers to a passage from *Genesis Rabba* (pericope 18,7; 31,8), where rabbis Pinhas and Hilkiyah in Rabbi Shimon's name discuss the creation of woman and argue that, since in Hebrew the name of the first woman (*ishah*), who was created out of Adam's rib, was derived from the name of the first man (*ish*), this can serve as proof that Hebrew was the language of creation. By contrast, the words denoting the members of both sexes differ in Greek (*anthropos* and *gyne*) and Aramaic (*gabra* and *itteta*). That means that the Hebrew language transmitted information that was absent from other tongues, as through its vocabulary it conveyed the origin of woman.<sup>701</sup> According to Rabbi Shimon, whom Dubno quotes, this example constitutes evidence of the fact that both the Torah and the world were created in the Hebrew tongue.<sup>702</sup>

However, Dubno notices that, since in some languages the word for woman can be derived from the word for man (for example in German: *Mann* and *Männin*),<sup>703</sup> this argument alone cannot serve as evidence of the fact that Hebrew

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<sup>700</sup> The idea that Hebrew was a divine language that surpassed all the other languages appeared already in medieval Jewish thought and was expressed for example by Yehuda Halevi and Isaac ben Samuel Halevi of Posen. Maimonides, in turn, did not consider Hebrew superior to other languages in other than moral sense, as it did not possess vocabulary related to sexuality. Halevi, *Sefer ha-Kuzari*, article 4, item 25, 130. Halevi, *Sifah Yitshak*, 4a; Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, trans. by Shlomo Pines (Chicago and London: University of Chicago, 1963), 435-435.

<sup>701</sup> Zwiep, *Mother of Reason and Revelation*, 116.

<sup>702</sup> Dubno, "Hakdamah", 15.

<sup>703</sup> Dubno uses the unusual word "Männin" for woman following Mendelssohn's translation in the Book of Genesis, which, in this case, was based on the translation by Luther. See: Genesis 2:23 in GSJ, 15.2, 28; Martin Luther, *Die Bibel, oder die ganze Heilige Schrift des Alten und Neuen Testament* (Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter, 2016), 3.

was the language of creation. This task can be fulfilled by evoking the proper nouns of biblical characters, since they are not translatable and lose their meaning when read by speakers of other languages (*she-lo yisbelu ha-ha'atakah mi-lashon le-lashon*). Dubno produces a long list of examples to support his point. For instant, the name "Adam" comes from "earth" (*adamah*), "Eve" from "mother of all the living" (*em kol ḥai*), "Cain" from "I created" (*kaniti*) etc. While Dubno does not provide any references, it seems that this passage might be based on *Sefer ha-Kuzari*.<sup>704</sup> Similarly, names of biblical places become meaningless when translated into another language, as happens in the case of Beer Sheva ("well of the oath", in memory of the oath of Abraham and Abimelech, Genesis 21:31), Penuel (from *pne el*, "the face of God" as seen by Jacob, Genesis 32:30), and Beit El ("house of God", the place where Jacob spoke to God in a dream, Genesis 28:19). This also applies to the names of Jewish holidays like Succot (the Feast of Tabernacles) or *shabat* (from God's "rest" after he created the world) etc.

In Dubno's opinion, the proper names are the most convincing evidence that Hebrew originates directly from the holy language of creation. Biblical translations lose an important aspect of the Hebrew Scripture, in which every name is endowed with a meaning and denotes some crucial information about a given biblical place or character. Furthermore, Hebrew word games are lost in translation, as in the case of *neḥash neḥoshet*, a copper snake made by Moses, which in Aramaic becomes *hivyah di-neḥashah* and in German - *eine kupferne Schlange*. Also, when a Hebrew term has several meanings, the translator is forced to choose only one of them. For this reason, depending on the context,

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<sup>704</sup> Schatz, *Sprache in der Zerstreung*, 41, n. 13. Compare: Halevi, *Sefer Ha-Kuzari*, article 2, item 68.

Onkelos, for example, would translate the same Hebrew word, *ken*, as either a “nest” or a “place of dwelling.” One can therefore conclude that only the original Hebrew text can be regarded as a reliable source of knowledge.

This long elaboration of evidence for Hebrew as the first human language is similar in structure to the first pages of *Alim li-terufah*, discussed below, where Dubno uses the same arguments but evokes different examples. The need for a copious list of proofs supporting the view that Hebrew was the first language stems from the fact that Scripture does not state this explicitly.<sup>705</sup> The assumption that Adam spoke Hebrew appeared only in the pseudepigraphical literature,<sup>706</sup> e.g., in the Book of Jubilees, and was subsequently challenged by a number of Christian intellectuals. For example, Theodoret of Cyrus (c. AD 393 – c. 458/466) claimed that Chaldean was more ancient than Hebrew. Louis Poisinet de Sivry (1733-1804) believed that all existing languages descended from the Celtic, and John Webb (1611-1672) stated the same about Chinese. Similar claims were made about German, Hungarian, and Polish.<sup>707</sup> Some scholars, such as Antonio de Nebrija (1441 - 1522) or Johannes Gropius Becanus (1519 - 1572), believed that Hebrew was in fact one of the languages created after the confusion of

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<sup>705</sup> The term “Hebrew language” does not appear in the Tanakh. Instead, the Hebrew Bible refers to the language of Canaan (*sefat kena’an*) (Isaiah 19:18) or the “Judean” language (*yehudit*) (II Kings 18:26, Isaiah 36:11, 13, Nehemiah 13:24). Joseph Shimron, *Reading Hebrew. The Language and the Psychology of Reading It* (Mahwah, New Jersey; London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2006), 112.

<sup>706</sup> Pseudoepigrapha are pseudonymous writings, composed between 300 BC and 300 AD, falsely attributed by their authors to individuals living in the past.

<sup>707</sup> See: Louis Poisinet de Sivry, *Origine des premieres sociétés, des peuples, des sciences, des arts et des idiomes anciens et modernes* (Paris: Jobert, 1769); John Webb, *An Historical Essay endeavouring the Probability that the Language of the Empire of China is the Primitive Language* (London: N. Brook, 1669). Umberto Eco, *The Search for the Perfect Language* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 100; Zwiép, *Mother of Reason*, 165-166.

speech in Babel.<sup>708</sup> For maskilim, such claims amounted to a usurpation of Hebrew's supreme place among other languages. By doubting Hebrew's divine origin, Gentile scholars equated it with other modern languages. Consequently, the study of Hebrew would be in no way superior and epistemologically enriching than the study of any other language. This exacerbated what Dubno regarded as the careless and profane attitude of non-Jewish Bible scholars towards the Hebrew text of Scripture,<sup>709</sup> a view he shared with Moses Mendelssohn, who tried to defend the divine origin of Hebrew against theories of the natural provenance of human speech.<sup>710</sup>

### **Dubno's view of the German Pentateuch translation**

Dubno's opinion on the usefulness of any translation of a Hebrew text was expressed in his approbation of Wolf Heidenheim's *Maḥzor*. This was a revised edition of the prayer book with a Hebrew commentary and a German translation written in Hebrew characters - a publication that adopted the model of *Sefer netivot ha-shalom*. Heidenheim embarked on this project in 1799 and continued until his death in 1832. To correct the mistakes that slipped into the previous *maḥzor* editions, he consulted the oldest available manuscripts. Furthermore, he removed from the prayer book some of the liturgical poems that were no longer understood.<sup>711</sup> In his approbation, Dubno praises the commentary and the

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<sup>708</sup> Demonet-Launay, "La désacralisation de l'hébreu...", 155-156, 165.

<sup>709</sup> We learn from excerpts of the introduction that were not included in *Sefer netivot ha-shalom* that Dubno criticised Gentile scholars who in their publications changed letters, accents and Masoretic punctuation. Samuel Joseph Fuenn, *Ha-Karmel* 3.6 (1876), 306.

<sup>710</sup> Lifschitz, "A Natural yet Providential Tongue", 31-47.

<sup>711</sup> Lewin, "Zum hundertsten Todestage Wolf Heidenheims", 1-16.

German translation that accompanied the text. In his view, a translation to a modern language, as long as it is correct and aesthetically pleasing, can be of great benefit to those who study religious literature. Following the Mishnah (Sotah 7:5) and the commentary of Obadiah Bartenura, he asserts that the Torah was given to Moses at Sinai in seventy languages in order that it would be communicated to other nations. This claim is based on Deuteronomy 27:8, "And thou shalt write upon the stones all the words of this law very clearly,"<sup>712</sup> where "very clearly" is interpreted as seventy languages, the total number of languages that the rabbis of the Mishnaic period thought to exist in their day. Dubno evokes this story as proof that command of non-Jewish languages is not only permitted but even recommended. He emphasises that every member of the Sanhedrin was required to master seventy languages, so that he would be able to communicate without an interpreter (Sanhedrin 17a). Following Rashi's interpretation of Deuteronomy 1:5, according to which Moses translated the Torah into seventy languages, Dubno claims that he must have done so perfectly in order that the translation would not confuse the readers. Consequently, any translation of holy writings that is correct and free from grammatical errors is acceptable.<sup>713</sup>

In his prospectus for the Biur, *Alim li-terufah*, Dubno presents Hebrew as the language of the chosen people and as a part of the Jewish cultural heritage which survived the confounding of speech after the attempted erection of the tower of Babel and the Israelites' prolonged stay in Egypt. It remained a spoken vernacular in the First Temple period, but was forgotten during the Babylonian

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<sup>712</sup> "וכתבת על האבנים את כל דברי התורה הזאת באר היטב."

<sup>713</sup> Dubno, "Haskamah", 5b.

exile as a result of intermingling with Gentiles and living under foreign rule. Consequently, the Israelites could no longer understand the language of the Tanakh. Jewish scholars throughout history had attempted to remedy this situation by translating the Hebrew text into the vernaculars of their day. In *Sefer netivot ha-shalom*, Dubno lists their translations, including the ancient Targum Jonathan -- Jonathan ben Uzziel's Aramaic version of the books of the Prophets, Targum Onkelos -- the Aramaic translation of the Pentateuch, and Aquila of Sinope's Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, as well as Saadia Gaon's Arabic translation of the tenth century, Jacob ben Joseph Tavus' Persian translation (Constantinople: 1546), and the sixteenth-century Ladino translation of the Pentateuch published in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>714</sup> By the same token, Dubno gives more credence to *Sefer netivot ha-shalom* and implicitly associates Mendelssohn and himself with the most renowned translators of Scripture.<sup>715</sup>

According to Dubno, the German translation was meant to enhance the study of the Tanakh among Jewish youth who had not mastered biblical Hebrew and were therefore unable to unveil the correct meaning of the text.<sup>716</sup> Until the publication of this German version, the only alternatives to Hebrew accessible to eighteenth-century Jewish readers were the faulty Bible translations into Yiddish,

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<sup>714</sup> According to *Alim li-terufah*, the Pentateuch translation into Greek and Ladino in Hebrew script was published in 1551/52 in Constantinople. What Dubno was referring to was a multilingual edition of the Hebrew Bible comprising the Greek, Aramaic, Spanish and Hebrew text text (Constantinople: Elieser Soncino, 1547), of which the Spanish translation alone was reprinted in Ferrara in 1553 by Abraham Usque. In Mendelssohn's *Or la-netivah* both editions are mentioned with the correct dates (GSJ, vol. 14, 241). See: GSJ, vol. 20.1, 461.

<sup>715</sup> Edward Breuer, "(Re)Creating Traditions of Language and Texts: the Haskalah and Cultural Continuity", *Modern Judaism* 16.2 (May, 1996), 163.

<sup>716</sup> GSJ, vol. 14, 327

authored – as Dubno has it – by Elija Bahur Ashkenazi (1469-1549)<sup>717</sup> and Yekutiel ben Isaac Blitz of Witmund (Amsterdam, 1679). While he admits that he did not manage to obtain a copy of the former translation, he declares the work by Yekutiel Blitz a failure, as his knowledge of both Hebrew and German turned out to be insufficient to produce a correct translation of Scripture.<sup>718</sup>

In his *Alim li-terufah*, Dubno discusses the burden of diaspora existence, justifying the German translation as a means to the end of facilitating Torah study without this entailing integration into European society and culture. The primacy of the Hebrew language, he argues, must be preserved, and the German translation will function in the same way as did all the previous translations of the Pentateuch, which enabled the Jews to preserve their distinctive identity in the past. These, and other statements Dubno makes about the Hebrew language in *Alim li-terufah*, are very close to the views he expresses on the subject in his introduction to *Sefer netivot ha-shalom*. They include, for example, the claim that after God confounded human speech as a punishment for the sins of mankind, the Hebrew language continued to be spoken only by the Jews, and that this language was transmitted to later generations of Jews through Abraham, the common ancestor of the Jewish nation:

“It has stayed with us since the days of Eber and Peleg, when the world was divided and God confounded the universal language. It stayed only with Eber and his descendants, reaching our progenitor Abraham, peace

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<sup>717</sup> In fact, this translation was made by Michael Adam and Paulus Fagius. See GSJ, vol. 15, 1, cxvi, n. 25. The source of Dubno’s mistake was Shabbatai Bass who ascribed the Judeo-German translation published in Constance in 1544 to Eliyahu Bachur.

<sup>718</sup> GSJ, vol. 14, 326-327



be on him. From then on, one generation after another, [it persisted] until our ancestors came to Egypt, and there, too, they did not forget their language.”<sup>719</sup>

As in his introduction to *Sefer netivot ha-shalom*, in *Alim li-terufah* Dubno demonstrates that Hebrew was a spoken language until the First Temple period by documenting the Scriptural use of Hebrew names, instances of wordplay based on Hebrew homonyms, and explicit references to Hebrew speakers. He also analyses the syntactical differences between Hebrew and German, which render translation from one to another more difficult. For example, in German, the adverbials of time are located at the end of the sentence, while in Hebrew they appear in the beginning. Moreover, Hebrew idioms cannot be translated literally into German, because they lose their metaphoric meaning, and in Hebrew, the names of body parts can have additional meanings, e.g., *ayin* can refer to an eye but also to a spring of water. All this points to the impossibility, which Dubno would later discuss in his introduction, of preserving the meaning of the Hebrew Bible in translation into any other language, which is why every translation should be accompanied by a commentary.

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<sup>719</sup> Ibid. 323.

“אשר נשארה בידינו מימי עבר ופלג אשר בימיו נפלגה הארץ ושם בלל ה' שפת כל הארץ. ולא נשארה כי אם ביד עבר וזרעו עד שנשתלשלה ובאה לאברהם אבינו ע"ה. ומהם דור אחר דור עדי באו אבותינו למצרים. גם שם לא שכחו לשונם.”

## Conclusion

Mendelssohn and Dubno seem to have had different ideas as to the method of solving the problem of the Hebrew illiteracy of Ashkenazi Jews. While the former hoped to increase proficiency in Hebrew and spread the correct understanding of Scripture mainly through the German translation of the Pentateuch, the latter strove to achieve the same aim by promoting a method that was less dependent on translation into modern languages, relying instead on an in-depth study of the Hebrew language and its grammatical rules. Although in his *Or la-netivah* Mendelssohn depicts Dubno's attitude towards the German Pentateuch translation as being highly enthusiastic,<sup>720</sup> it seems that, from the very beginning, Dubno was well-aware of the limitations of the translated text, which could never replace the study of Scripture in the original Hebrew with all its complex connotations. One explanation for this dissonance between Mendelssohn's description of Dubno's eager participation in the translation project, and Dubno's own reservations about it as expressed in his writings, may be a mutual misunderstanding of their respective motivations. While Mendelssohn regarded the publication of *Sefer netivot ha-shalom* as a means to promoting the study of both Hebrew and German, Dubno never expressed any interest in the study of German per se. Even if, in his opinion, Pentateuch translations deserve to be praised for their educational potential, they are no more than a consequence of the inability of most Jews to understand the original Hebrew. It seems that Dubno was pleased by Mendelssohn's translation, first and

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<sup>720</sup> GSJ, vol. 14, 243-244.

foremost because it facilitated the proper understanding of the Pentateuchal text, but he never viewed the *Biur* as a tool for studying German as such.

Dubno's ideas on the Hebrew language agreed with the stance of the rabbinical elite and was based on authoritative medieval sources. Just as Menahem ben Saruq, a tenth-century grammarian, he appears to have believed that language is related to the rationality of human thought.<sup>721</sup> He completely rejected the possibility of anything other than the divine origin of speech, and, consequently, the beginning of his introduction is a rebuttal of the theory of the natural provenance of human language upheld by many non-Jewish scholars at the time.

Even though Dubno never refers to Gentile authors by name, he seems to have been aware of the challenges to the traditional Jewish worldview posed by non-Jewish biblical scholarship, such as the invalidation of the Masoretic vocalisation and the rejection of the claim that Hebrew was the first human tongue. Dubno's responses to these challenges were deeply entrenched in his Jewish scholarly heritage, echoing the opinions of rabbinic authorities. His take on grammar seems to have been informed by the Ashkenazi grammatical tradition of *nakdanim*, experts in Masoretic vocalisation,<sup>722</sup> while his perception of the field of grammar corresponds to the views of Solomon Hanau, who defined the work of *medakdek*, grammarian, as a profession.<sup>723</sup> Despite the disapproval of the study of Hebrew grammar expressed by many members of the rabbinical

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<sup>721</sup> Zwiep, *Mother of Reason and Revelation*, 13-14.

<sup>722</sup> David Kromhout, Irene E. Zwiep, "God's Word Confirmed: Authority, Truth and the Text of the Early Modern Jewish Bible" in Dirk van Miert, et al. (eds), *Scriptural Authority and Biblical Criticism in the Dutch Golden Age: God's Word Questioned* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 136-137.

<sup>723</sup> Zwiep, "Adding the Reader's Voice", 178.

elite, Dubno managed to reconcile his passion for this field with his loyalty to the values they propagated. In fact, almost every statement he makes in his introduction to *Sefer netivot ha-shalom* is supported by a reference to one or more recognised medieval rabbinical sources. These include Saadia's *Azharot*, Rashi's Bible commentary, *Sefer he-arukh* by Nathan ben Jehiel of Rome, Yehuda ha-Levi's *Sefer ha-Kuzari*, Abraham ibn Ezra's *Tsaḥot*, David Kimhi's *Mikhlol*, the Zohar, and Isaac Arama's *Akedat Yitshak*. However, while Dubno was very committed to the study of the Hebrew grammar, his desire for maintaining the purity of Hebrew and composing poetry and texts in biblical Hebrew places him in a more conservative group of contemporary Jewish intellectuals, as this kind of rigid language had no potential for becoming a successive means of communication with the common Jewish reader. For that reason, Dubno's adherence to pure, biblical Hebrew was an approach that, while intended at maintaining Hebrew's high status among the Jewish community, was condemned to failure and gradually replaced with a readiness to incorporate foreign vocabulary and create new Hebrew words. While he desired to spread the knowledge of the Hebrew language and literature among the Jewish population, his work cannot be seen as an attempt at a conscious revival of Hebrew and to turn it into a fully-functional language, an idea which emerged in the Berlin Haskalah, and was executed by the nineteenth-century Eastern-European maskilim.<sup>724</sup>

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<sup>724</sup> Shavit, "A Duty too Heavy to Bear", 111-123; Schatz, "Peoples Pure of Speech", 181-187.

## **Chapter 4: Dubno's poetry and belles-lettres**

### **Introduction**

Dubno shared his life between two prominent centres of Hebrew literature: Amsterdam and Berlin. The Hebrew poetry and belles-lettres, which thrived from the 1760s until the end of the eighteenth century in Amsterdam, was a popular pastime of educated Dutch Jewry. While in the Netherlands, composing verses in Hebrew was a means of entertainment for the Sephardi Port Jews of Amsterdam, in Prussia Hebrew poetry often served as a carrier of Enlightenment ideas. Composition of belles-lettres and poems in Hebrew posed several difficulties, such as a lack of adequate vocabulary, which was reflected in the often poor artistic quality of modern Hebrew literature and lyrics. As Robert Alter has observed, Hebrew poetry was merely a literary curiosity, simply evidence that it was “possible to write poems in Hebrew.” In his assessment of the maskilic poetry, he expressed an opinion that while being truly passionate for the Hebrew language, the maskilim lacked basic writing skills, which was evident in the stylistic and narrative shortcomings of their work.<sup>725</sup> Maskilic literature has also been criticised by both Joseph Klausner and Dan Miron who noted the artificiality of style and lack of logical plot organisation.<sup>726</sup>

Parallel to the Jewish Enlightenment, there was an increased interest in Hebrew poetry among non-Jewish scholars. While previous generations of

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<sup>725</sup> Robert Alter, *Modern Hebrew Literature* (New York: Behrman House, 1975), 4.

<sup>726</sup> Dan Miron, “Rediscovering Haskalah Poetry”, *Prooftexts* 1.3 (September 1981), 292-305; Klausner, *Historiah shel ha-sifrut ha-ivrit ha-ḥadashah*, 155.

academics strove to find rhyme and rhythm in biblical poetry,<sup>727</sup> Robert Lowth, one of the seminal biblicists of the Age of Reason, arrived at a novel conclusion that in Hebrew lyrics these stylistic devices were nonexistent and instead the biblical poets employed the technique of *parallelismus membrorum*, whereby the verses consist of parallel syntactical constructions, expressing either complementary or antithetical ideas.<sup>728</sup> This view was eagerly adopted by the maskilim, who viewed it as confirmation of the uniqueness of Hebrew biblical poetry.<sup>729</sup>

Of Dubno's literary activity, one story and twelve poems have been preserved. While two of his poems were composed on the occasion of a wedding and two as an introduction to a book, the majority of Dubno's poetic works seem to have been created for his pleasure or in order to convey a didactic message. In terms of its content and style, Dubno's poetry seems to have much more in common with the Dutch Hebrew poetry of his times than with the poems composed by Berlin maskilim. Its didactic and religious aspect makes it similar for example to the work of David Franco Mendes. Some works were probably intended for being read aloud at meetings of Amsterdam literary circles. However, as Dubno was educated in Eastern Europe and spent ten years of his life in Berlin, his poetry needs to be considered not only through the lens of eighteenth-century Amsterdam, but also in the context of the Berlin Haskalah, even though

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<sup>727</sup> Segal, "Le-ḥeker tsuratah shel ha-shirah ha-mikra'it", 91-97; Kristine Louise Haugen, "Hebrew Poetry Transformed, or, Scholarship Invincible between Renaissance and Enlightenment", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 75 (2012), 1-29.

<sup>728</sup> Robert Lowth, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1969), 154-157.

<sup>729</sup> Sorkin, *Moses Mendelssohn and the Religious Enlightenment*, 75-76.

his works were never as provocative as the ones by Isaac Satanow, and his style did not please the editors of *Ha-Me'asef*, who openly criticised his writings.<sup>730</sup>

Since he was a very versatile scholar and a poet, a number of eighteenth-century compositions on various topics were incorrectly ascribed to him by later historians, which can throw a false light on the nature of his literary and scholarly interests. For that reason, besides the analysis of Dubno's own artistic output, this chapter will also engage with works that were misattributed to him.

### **Maskilic Hebrew poetry in the eighteenth century**

The development of the Haskalah poetry is marked by some of the main goals of the maskilic agenda - the renewal of the Hebrew language and the desire for the moral improvement of the human condition, an aim which the Haskalah shared with the European Enlightenment. Dan Miron has divided maskilic poetry into two distinctive genres: long epics, which were proliferate until 1840s, and dramatic *poema*, verse novels, that gained popularity in Eastern Europe in the late Haskalah. One of the titles that can be found in Dubno's booklist is of the most influential maskilic epic, *Shire tiferet* by Naphtali Wessely (RS, octavo 51, no. 411-412).<sup>731</sup> The work established the rules of the genre that were later imitated by other Jewish poets, for example Shalom Hacoen (1772 – 1845) in his *Nir David* (1834). The maskilic epic, written in ornate style, usually tells faithfully the story of a character from the Hebrew Bible, who may serve as a role model. The poet would aim at didactics and the moral improvement of the reader,

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<sup>730</sup> See pages 285-288.

<sup>731</sup> Naphtali Wessely, *Shire tiferet* (Berlin: 1782–1802; Prague: 1829), 5 vols.

often revealing his thoughts about the narrative whose events are thoroughly analysed and compared with similar incidents in other parts of Scripture. Consequently, the subject is given a theological reading and an abstract interpretation of human psychology, effectively making it, according to Dan Miron, a biblical *midrash*. The maskilic epic was thus deeply rooted in the Jewish literary and religious tradition.<sup>732</sup>

As the Haskalah was becoming more secular and humanistic, the long epic lost ground to the *poema*, a genre that was more suitable for expressing human emotions such as love and fear of death. The work would usually consist of a short prose interrupted by lyrical texts, and it would not convey the moralistic and theological message that early maskilic epics usually contained. The most famous examples of the genre are *Beruriah* by Samuel Mulder, describing a conflict between Rav Meir and his wife, and *Shire bat-Tsiyon* by Micah Joseph Lebensohn (1828 – 1852), who described the most dramatic events in the lives of biblical characters. In contrast to the poets of the early Haskalah, Lebensohn did not resort to summarising the biblical plot, but concentrated on the emotional experience of characters in crucial moments of their existence and presented their deeds as being often ambiguous and controversial. The genre of the maskilic *poema* was further developed in the late Haskalah, for example by Judah Leib Gordon (1830 – 1892).<sup>733</sup>

An important tool for spreading the ideas of the Haskalah and its poetry were maskilic journals. The most prominent among them was Isaac Euchel's *Ha-Me'asef*, which was published in Koenigsberg and Berlin, between the years

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<sup>732</sup> Miron, "Rediscovering Haskalah Poetry", 292-305.

<sup>733</sup> Ibid.



1783 and 1797, 1808 and 1811.<sup>734</sup> Dubno owned a few issues of the journal (RS, octavo 46, no. 203-204; *nishmatim*, octavo 57, no. 31), and, as will be discussed later, his essay including a poem, *Birkat Yosef*, was given a negative review in one of the issues.<sup>735</sup>

Several maskilim attempted to revive not only biblical Hebrew as such, but also the biblical literary genres. While Dubno's *Yuval ve-Na'aman* imitates biblical stories, Isaac Satanow was inspired by wisdom literature in composing his *Mishle Asaf* (1789 – 1802), where he employed the authoritative tone of the Book of Proverbs for expressing the religious maskilic programme and promoting the value of knowledge, ethics and piety. In order to attract more readers, Satanow attributed his composition to an ancient author whose work he had enriched with his commentary, thus imitating the tradition of publishing biblical texts with running scholarly comments. Another maskil, Saul Berlin, ascribed his responsa *Besamim Rosh* to Rabbi Asher ben Yehiel (1250 or 1259 – 1327), in the hope that this eminent medieval authority would invest his own criticism of *pilpul* with greater validity.<sup>736</sup>

Besides his interest in ancient texts, Satanow also re-wrote works of medieval literature such as *Sefer ha-Kuzari* by Yehuda Halevi, a philosophical discourse describing conversion of the king of the Khazars to Judaism in the eighth century. Satanow retold the story in his *Divre rivot* (c. 1800), but he enriched it with an expression of support for certain items on the Enlightenment agenda, such as religious tolerance and educational reforms.<sup>737</sup>

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<sup>734</sup> Pelli, "Literature of Haskalah", 333.

<sup>735</sup> "Mishpat al sefer ḥadash", *Ha-Me'asef* 1 (1784), 47-48.

<sup>736</sup> Pelli, "Literature of Haskalah", 333-348.

<sup>737</sup> *Ibid.*

While many maskilim drew inspiration from traditional Jewish texts, some followers of Haskalah adopted the genres of modern European literature in their writings. For example, Isaac Euchel composed *Igrot Meshulam ben Uriyah Ha'eshtemo'i*, an epistolary story reminiscent of Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes*. The impressions and thoughts of the main character, a native of the Middle East who is travelling in Europe, serve as a critique of conservative Judaism and praise for Jews who can embrace modernity while preserving their religious customs. Another popular genre was the Hebrew fable and parable, an adaptation of the European fable tradition which the early maskilim classified as a poetic genre, even if they were written in prose.<sup>738</sup> Their fables were composed in a biblical style and usually contained an explanatory title and a short concluding summary. Dubno himself wrote a number of allegorical parables, discussed below.

Robert Lowth revolutionised the study of biblical poetry by including in it the genre of prophecy. In his opinion, the notions of prophet and poet were to a great extent synonymous in the Hebrew Bible. At the same time, however, he held a poor opinion on the quality of biblical poetry:

“Its form is simple above every other; the radical words are uniform, and resemble each other almost exactly; nor are the inflexions numerous, or materially different: whence we may readily understand, that its metres are neither complex, nor capable of much variety (...).”<sup>739</sup>

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<sup>738</sup> Moshe Pelli, “Eleh mishle ‘ha-me’asef’: derekh ha-mashal ha-moderni be-reshitah shel ha-haskalah ha-ivrit - ‘lilmod musar haskel be-mashal u-melitsah’”, *Hebrew Studies* 40 (1999), 172-175.

<sup>739</sup> Lowth, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry*, 35.

This criticism stemmed from certain preconceptions and poetic conventions with which biblical verse simply did not comply. One of the most discussed aspects of poetry during the Enlightenment period was its ability to trigger emotions and a sense of beauty in the reader. Robert Lowth, for example, stipulated that poetry should be a direct expression of the sublime and believed that the ability to create and appreciate the aesthetics of lyrical verse was instilled in humanity by God.<sup>740</sup> According to Edmund Burke, poetry surpassed the visual arts in its ability to affect people. Although verbal description could provide only a general idea of an object, it would have a greater effect because words constitute the most powerful means of transmitting ideas. This concept was further developed by Mendelssohn who explained in his review of Burke's work that, in his own opinion, one was more emotionally touched by paintings or music than by literature, since the latter conveyed details of an object one after another, while the former transmitted all of them simultaneously.<sup>741</sup> Another theoretician of aesthetics, Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, claimed that a poem could be a source of sensual pleasure thanks to its metaphors and figurative language. In his opinion, poetry should not be analysed, as this not only does not contribute to its aesthetic appreciation, but it also dilutes the whole experience.<sup>742</sup>

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<sup>740</sup> Ibid. vol. 2, 2- 59.

<sup>741</sup> Moses Mendelssohn, "Anmerkungen über das englische Buch: On the Sublime and Beautiful", GSJ, vol. 3.1, 241; Tomá Hlobil, "Two Concepts of Language and Poetry: Edmund Burke and Moses Mendelssohn", *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 8.3 (2000), 447-458.

<sup>742</sup> Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten; Karl Aschenbrenner and William B. Holther (eds), *Reflections on poetry; Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten's Meditationes philosophicae de nonnullis ad poema pertinentibus* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954), 67-68; Lifschitz, *Language and Enlightenment*, 52-53.

While Lowth dismissed the value of biblical poetry, Moses Mendelssohn considered it unsurpassed from the aesthetic and structural points of view.<sup>743</sup> In order to defend biblical poetry against the critiques of the genre, and to promote its philosophical qualities, he translated the Book of Psalms into German.<sup>744</sup> The poetic activity of the maskilim was thus not only an expression of their wish to restore the status of Hebrew as the national language, but also their way of refuting attacks on biblical poetry by non-Jewish scholars.<sup>745</sup>

### ***Yuval ve-Na'aman***

Dubno's *Yuval ve-Na'aman* [Yuval and Na'aman] is a fictitious story enriched by poems.<sup>746</sup> It is his only known non-scholarly composition in prose. The work is not dated, but a reference to the wedding of Leib Oppenheim and Rebecca Cohen, which took place in 1790, indicates that it might have been commissioned by the couple for this occasion.<sup>747</sup> The poem has never been published, probably because it was an occasional poem composed for the sole purpose of honouring the wedding ceremony. This type of communal, Hebrew poetry constituted a pastime among educated Jews of eighteenth-century

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<sup>743</sup> GSJ, vol. 14, 134 (Exodus 66b).

<sup>744</sup> Sorkin, *Moses Mendelssohn and the Religious Enlightenment*, 49-52.

<sup>745</sup> For a discussion of an Enlightenment scholarly quest for the first and most perfect of human languages, see the chapter "Dubno's and the Hebrew language renewal".

<sup>746</sup> Dubno, *Yuval ve-Na'aman*, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana, HS. ROS. 520.

<sup>747</sup> Lajb Fuks and Renate G. Fuks-Mansfeld wrote that the work was composed in Berlin around 1770. However, no such information appears in the manuscript and Dubno moved to Berlin only in 1772. Lajb Fuks; Renate G. Fuks-Mansfeld, *Hebrew and Judaic Manuscripts in Amsterdam Public Collections* (Leiden: Brill, 1973), vol. 1, 146.

Amsterdam, and, in contrast to maskilic poems, was intended purely as a linguistic experiment rather than a carrier of Enlightenment ideas.<sup>748</sup>

The introduction to the work states that the art of writing Hebrew poetry came to an end at the time of Judges and it has not been revived since then. This is followed by the story of a childless couple, apparently living in Palestine. The wife, Shiprah, wishes to comfort her saddened husband, Benjamin of the clan of the Zarhites,<sup>749</sup> and she takes him for a walk in his estate so that he would see how hard-working his slaves are. The disillusioned husband explains to her that he had overheard a conversation between two of his slaves, in which one of them admitted that he was working so hard only because he knew that his master had no heir and that all his labour would benefit him, the slave, in the future, as he would take over the estate after his master's death.<sup>750</sup> The wife, outraged, recalls the many biblical stories of childless couples who were granted offspring thanks to God's mercy. She decides to fast and her piety is rewarded - an angel appears to her husband and announces that his wife is pregnant with twins who will raise the art of Hebrew poetry back from the ashes. The plot then moves directly to the time when the twin brothers are adults and become talented poets. However, they are not able to find an audience that would appreciate their work. They therefore decide to leave Palestine and travel elsewhere to look for people who, just like them, are fond of poetry. They go to Europe, since they have heard that Leib ben Ziskind Oppenheim of Koenigsberg, a famous maskil, is about to marry

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<sup>748</sup> Shlomo Berger and Irene E. Zwiep, "Epigones and the Formation of New Literary Canons: Sephardi Anthologies in Eighteenth-Century Amsterdam," *Studia Rosenthaliana* 40 (2007-2008), 152-158.

<sup>749</sup> Zarhites - descendants of Zerah, Judah's son (Joshua 7:17).

<sup>750</sup> Genesis 15:3 and 15:4 suggests that if a master was childless, a slave could inherit his property. See: Richard H. Hiers, *Justice and Compassion in Biblical Law* (New York: Continuum, 2009), 32-33.

Rebecca bat Benjamin Cohen of Amesfoort. Although no specific location is mentioned in Dubno's work, we know that the actual wedding to which he alludes took place in Baambrugge, in the Netherlands.<sup>751</sup> After Yuval and Na'aman arrive in Europe, they prepare a performance for a wedding reception in which they praise God-fearing women and disdain physical beauty which is bound to lead to vanity.

Dubno starts *Yuval ve-Na'aman* with the biblical motif of infertility, and ends it with the wedding of a young couple in modern Ashkenazi Europe. In this way, a transition takes place from ancient times to the Jewish Enlightenment, in which the cycle of birth connects the past to the present. The arrival of the two brothers in the Netherlands implies that the Dutch Jews carry the torch of the biblical literary heritage. The motif of the childless couple who, thanks to God's mercy, produce offspring despite several years of infertility or in advanced age, is a recurrent theme in the Hebrew Bible, pertaining, for example, to Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, and Jacob and Rachel. According to Tikva Frymer-Kensky, the birth of a son after years of infertility emphasises the exceptionality of such biblical protagonists as Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, and presents pregnancy as an act entirely dependent on divine mercy.<sup>752</sup>

The composition was defined by Fuks as a "collection of poems".<sup>753</sup> This term is, however, misleading, because it ignores the fact that the majority of the work was written in prose imitating biblical narrative style. The transition between

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<sup>751</sup> "Levie Susskind Oppenheim", "Rebecca Benjamin Cohen" in: Akevot. Dutch Jewish Genealogical Data Base, available at: <https://www.dutchjewry.org/genealogy/ashkenazi/19312.htm> (accessed on 28.11.2017).

<sup>752</sup> Tikva Frymer-Kensky, "Rachel: Bible" in: *Jewish Women. A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia*, Jewish Women's Archive. Available at: <http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/rachel-bible> [accessed on March 20, 2009].

<sup>753</sup> Fuks, Fuks-Mansfeld, *Hebrew and Judaic Manuscripts*, vol. 1, 146.

the two parts of the narrative, the history of Benjamin and Shiphrah and the journey of Yuval and Na'aman, gives the readers the impression that they are reading two quite different, loosely connected stories. The protagonists seem to be of little significance in themselves. The most important aim of *Yuval ve-Na'aman* is to create, by means of allegorical characters, a link between Palestine and Europe. The beginning of the story is not set in any particular historical period. It relates events taking place shortly before the conception of the two brothers who will later move to the eighteenth-century Netherlands, but the fact that Benjamin is described as a Zarhite and that he owns an estate in Palestine might suggest that he lives in biblical times. If that is the case, then Yuval and Na'aman travel not only in space but also in time, thus symbolising a direct connection between biblical Hebrew and eighteenth-century Hebrew literature. By establishing an immediate link between Palestine and the Netherlands, Dubno seems to downplay the Hebrew poetry of the medieval Jewish authors from Iberia, and he makes a direct connection between contemporary and biblical poetry. His short story differs from the early maskilic epic in that it does not meticulously retell any biblical narrative while being concerned with contemporary events. However, it shares many common characteristics with the long Haskalah epic in terms of style - the prose narrative is interlaced with short poems, and it does not depict the emotions of its characters.

The names of the protagonists are derived from the Hebrew Bible and were not in use during Dubno's lifetime. Just as Romantic authors drew inspiration from classical antiquity and folk tales, the maskilim turned to the

Hebrew Scripture, a symbol of past glory.<sup>754</sup> The biblical Yuval (literally: “stream”, “brook”) was a son of Lemech and Adah and a descendant of Cain. He was described by Dubno as “the father of all who play stringed instruments and pipes” (*avi kol tofes, kinor ve-ugav*, Genesis 4:21). His brother, Na’aman, was named after “the sweet psalmist of Israel” (*ne’im zemirot Yisrael*, Samuel 2:1), the biblical verse describing King David. Na’aman was also a character from the Hebrew Bible, an army commander of the king of Aram (2 Kings 5) who was victorious in the battlefield thanks to God’s grace. Since he suffered from leprosy, he was advised by the prophet Elisha to bathe in the Jordan river seven times. Although at first unwilling to pursue this suggestion, in the end Na’aman followed Elisha’s instructions and was healed. As a result, he rejected the cult of the god Rimmon and embraced the faith in the God of Israel. Dubno’s decision to choose these two names for his fictional twins might be explained by his wish to combine the arts, symbolised by Yuval, with piety, represented by Na’aman. The choice of the latter, a warrior and a non-Jew, seems surprising for the literary tastes of a traditional and observant author such as Dubno.

Since Dubno briefly mentions Königsberg as a city that excels over other places, one might think that he did not abandon the values of the German Haskalah even after he had left Prussia. The city gained prominence as the capital of East Prussia, the seat of Alberts University and the place of residence of Immanuel Kant. Due to its location near the border between Prussia and the Russian Empire, it was of major importance to international trade and many Jewish merchants stopped there on their way to other destinations.<sup>755</sup> While

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<sup>754</sup> Shlomo Yaniv, “The Hebrew Literary Ballad: A Borrowed Genre”, *Orbis Litterarum* 44 (1989), 212.

<sup>755</sup> Heinz Ischreyt, *Königsberg und Riga* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2012), vii-ix.



Dubno did not display any interest in modern non-Jewish philosophy, one might still assume that his praise for Königsberg stemmed from its importance as a centre of Haskalah. *Hevrat dorshe leshon ever* (The Society for the Exponents of the Hebrew Language) was established there in 1782, and its flagship publication, *Ha-Me'asef*, was printed for the first time in 1783, turning that city into the most important centre of the German Haskalah after Berlin.<sup>756</sup>

Dubno's *Yuval ve-Na'aman* begins and ends with a depiction of a religious Jewish woman - the twins' mother at the beginning, and the ideal Jewish woman evoked in their wedding song towards the end of the story. Complimenting a woman's religiosity was of particular significance at that time, as more and more daughters of the rich Jewish families were attracted to Gentile secular culture, studied modern languages and read romances in non-Jewish languages. The growing attraction of non-Jewish culture brought with it the threat of disregard for Jewish religious observance or even conversion to Christianity. Therefore, a Jewish woman confined to the pious circle of family members was regarded by many disenchanted maskilim as a good example of female virtue.<sup>757</sup> From Dubno's point of view, Yuval and Na'aman's mother, who gave birth to them thanks to her piety and fasting, could serve as an ideal of the religiously observant

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<sup>756</sup> Jill Storm, "Culture and Exchange: The Jews of Königsberg, 1700-1820" (PhD dissertation, Washington University in St. Louis, 2010), 8, 210-213.

<sup>757</sup> Feiner, "The Modern Jewish Woman", 453-99.

Nevertheless, the process of emancipation of women belonging to the financial elites and their integration into the Gentile society could not be hindered, which was well exemplified by individuals such as Henriette Herz (1764 - 1847) and Rachel Levin-Varnhagen (1771 – 1833) in Berlin and Fanny von Arnstein (1758 - 1818) in Vienna who led popular literary salons which gathered the intellectual elite of that time. See: Deborah Sadie Hertz, *Jewish High Society In Old Regime Berlin* (Syracuse University Press, 2005); Lowenstein, *The Berlin Jewish Community*, 105-106.

Jewish woman and a model to follow for the Jewesses of eighteenth-century Europe.

*Yuval ve-Na'aman* displays many features that were characteristic of the Haskalah literature, such as lofty language, succinct, biblical style with its concern for action rather than detailed description of circumstances and events, as well as didacticism.<sup>758</sup> Just like other maskilic authors whose main goal was to educate,<sup>759</sup> Dubno aimed at combining the useful with the pleasant in his poetry. However, in contrast to the overlong maskilic literary forms, which frequently lack causal connections, Dubno's short story has a logically organised, if rather trite, plot. Love and the search for knowledge, the main subjects of the composition, were recurrent themes in Haskalah literature.<sup>760</sup> At the same time, the work is an occasional poem for a wedding ceremony, a genre commonly composed by Dutch Jewish intellectuals of that time,<sup>761</sup> and, for that reason, it includes passages praising the bride and the feature of modesty. Since it was to be performed in public, it comprised several biblical quotes that could be recognised by the guests, with the intention to impress them with the craftsmanship of the author. The main characters of *Yuval ve-Na'aman* bear a certain resemblance to the allegorical protagonists of Moses Hayyim Luzzato in his *La-yesharim tehilah*, a drama-of-ideas whose manuscript Dubno had found in the library of Ets Hayim in Amsterdam and republished in Berlin in 1780.

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<sup>758</sup> Yaniv, "The Hebrew Literary Ballad", 204-221; Yair Mazor, "The Poetics of Composition of the Hebrew Short Story in the Haskalah Period," *AJS Review* 10.1 (1985), 89-91.

<sup>759</sup> Mazor, "The poetics of composition", 89-110.

<sup>760</sup> Ibid.

<sup>761</sup> Zwiep, "Jewish Enlightenment Reconsidered", 283-286.

*La-yesharim tehilah* [Glory to the Righteous], composed in 1743, is an allegoric love story between Tehilah (Praise), the daughter of Hamon (People), and Yosher (Honesty), the son of Emet (Truth), who are vowed to be married by their parents. However, following the death of Emet, Rahav (Haughtiness), the son of Ta'avah (Lust), impersonates the promised bridegroom. At the end of the drama Yosher manages to prove his true identity and can happily marry Tehilah. Luzzato's works had a major influence on the Hebrew Haskalah and, according to Simon Ginzburg, *La-yesharim tehilah* not only excelled in its poetic aesthetics and presentation of a mosaic of human feelings, but it was also innovative in terms of introducing a scientific description of nature.<sup>762</sup> In his introduction to *La-yesharim tehilah*, Luzzatto expressed the hope that the work would persuade the Jewish youth of the beauty of Hebrew, a language which was not dead and in which literature could be created. In his view, the holy tongue was indeed first and foremost the language of Scripture, but it was also endowed with an aesthetic value, which makes it suitable also for a secular, didactic oeuvre.<sup>763</sup>

### **Dubno's poetry**

In his literary activity, Dubno experimented with a number of lyrical genres, including the elegy, the epithalamium (a poem written on the occasion of marriage), the Purim riddle, as well as didactic poetry. *Kol simḥah* [The Voice of Happiness] (Berlin: 1780) was composed on the occasion of the wedding of Simha Bunim, son of the Berlin maskil Eisik Dessau, and Caecilie (Zippora),

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<sup>762</sup> Ginzburg, *The Life and Works of Moses Hayyim Luzzatto*, 111-113.

<sup>763</sup> Moses Hayyim Luzzatto, *La-yesharim tehilah* (Lemberg: Michael Wolf, 1879), v-x.

daughter of Daniel Itzig Jaffe.<sup>764</sup> Dubno's composition is a short piece of theatre in which seven poets share observations about the young couple. The description of the bride, who is compared to the biblical "woman of valour", was later partly copied in *Yuval ve-Na'aman* and to a great extent is a patchwork of verses from the Book of Proverbs. Dubno's poem was not the only one to be written on that occasion; besides him other maskilim, including Isaac Satanow, David Friedrichsfeld (c. 1755 – 1810, a contributor to *Ha-Me'asef* and the author of a biography of Hartwig Wessely, *Zekher tsadik*), and the Hebrew poet Samuel Romanelli (1757-1817), sent their verses to the couple.<sup>765</sup>

In *Evel yaḥid* [Private Mourning] (Berlin: 1776), an elegy on the death of Jacob Emden (1697-1776), which was applauded in *Nieuw Israelietisch weekblad*,<sup>766</sup> Dubno describes his distress after learning about the demise of the rabbi of Altona, with whom he had corresponded and whose *sidur*, *Amudei shamayim*, was helpful to him while writing his own work, *Avodat matanah*, which is not extant.<sup>767</sup> He recounts the achievements and the numerous publications of the deceased rabbi, and calls on the readers to join him in his grief. The poem consists of thirty-four strophes made up of two lines each, which is an allusion to the thirty-four works that Emden had published during his lifetime. Written in a grandiose, affected style, it is an acrostic whose initial letters in the first verses read "Solomon ben Yoel". *Evel yaḥid* is the only elegy written by Dubno, who did

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<sup>764</sup> Thekla Keuck, *Hofjuden und Kulturbürger. Die Geschichte der Familie Itzig in Berlin* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), *Jüdische Religion, Geschichte und Kultur* series, vol. 12, 280. Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn*, 194, 278, 483.

<sup>765</sup> Keuck, *Hofjuden und Kulturbürger*, 246-280.

<sup>766</sup> See an opinion by "Dioktos" in: "Ingezonden stuken. Jacob Israël Emden", *Nieuw Israelietisch weekblad*, 05.01.1866, no. 23, 3 (not paginated) - "Zijn scholier Salomo Dubno rigtte hem eene gedenknaald op, beter dan die van erts of steen, door het treurgedicht Evel Yahid" ["His pupil, Solomon Dubno, erected an obelisk for him, better than that of ore or stone, a mourning poem "Evel Yahid"."]

<sup>767</sup> Solomon Dubno, *Evel yaḥid* (Berlin: 1776), 1 (unpaginated).

not express his grief in writing on the death of his other acquaintances, such as Solomon Chelm or Naftali Wessely.

Dubno's literary output includes "Se'u einekhem" ["Lift up your eyes"], a monorhyme poem about the destruction of the temple, which he composed as an introduction to *Binyan ha-bayit*, a book on the Temple of Ezekiel by Yehiel Hillel ben David Altschuler, who was a rabbi in Jaworow in Galicia in the seventeenth century. The composition is an acrostic, with the initial letters reading "Solomon ben Yoel of Dubno". It seems that there are several lyrical voices in the poem; the first is ambiguous, it might be a personification of the Holy Land or the daughter of Zion. The second seems to be the Temple, while the third appears to be Dubno himself. The shift between speakers can be detected only by the context and the grammatical forms. While the first voice can be identified from references to natural phenomena that constitute aspects of the speaker, such as dew and rain, the second refers to its 'building' and 'surrounding walls', and the third defines himself as a poet and calls on rabbis and scholars to lead a studious and ethical life in order to speed up the coming of the Messiah. The transition from allegorical speakers to poet in Dubno's poem is reminiscent of the Book of Lamentations, in which a female allegory of Zion is first described in the third person, then in the first person, after which the author himself becomes the main speaker.<sup>768</sup> At the beginning of the poem, Dubno depicts Palestine as it might look like at the coming of the Messiah. Some motifs seem to be references to the Book of Ezekiel, for example the description of the speaker's words as being

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<sup>768</sup> Alan Mintz, *Hurban. Responses to Catastrophe in Hebrew Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 25.

sweet as honey (Ezekiel 3:3) or the overall vision of prosperity for the people of Israel in Palestine (Ezekiel 34).

*Lift up your eyes and see, rich men, people - both distant and near*

*Go ahead, eat my bread, and when you are thirsty, would I not give you my wine and my milk to drink?*

*Men of reason, the beloved wise, prepare yourselves for me*

*For surely, my dew is refreshing, my rainfall abundant and my droplets besprinkle the earth*

*With my own mouth I call out to those quarrying the mountain, let them look and see the beauty of my stone*

*Oh, noble ones, come closer and see how pleasant my building is, as well as the walls that surround me*

*Yehiel Hillel, who is David's son, is the one who helped me compose myself and pacified my anger and distress*

*He is well known in the fortress, the fortress of David and Zion. He enlisted his force to conduct my battle*

*I shall plead on his behalf with my God, who is great in counsel and mighty in work (Jeremiah 32:19), the rock of my strength (Psalm 62:2; 62:6; Tanakh - Psalm 62:3; 62:7)*

*To enable him to rejoice at my joy, to sing [happily] when I am spared my pain*

*I present my poems to the reader of my book and to anyone who sees my writings*

*May my words be sweet to his palate like honey and nectar, may he desire  
my ideas and my idiom*

*And may each master of Scripture, Mishnah and Talmud warm himself at  
the fire of my spark*

*I call on every rabbi and every student who wanders in the field to walk in  
my path*

*– an upright path, never known before, until the coming of a man of whom  
I approve [...]<sup>769</sup>*

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<sup>769</sup> Published in: Yehiel Hillel ben David Altschuler, *Binyan ha-bayit* (Amsterdam: 1775), 2. See the scan of the vocalized printed version of the poem in appendix no. 2

רחוקי עם איש קרובי	בני אדם גם בני איש	שאו עיניכם נגידים
קכם ייני עם חלבי	ועת תצמאו הלא אש	לכו נא לחמו בלחמי
פנו נא התבוננו בי	תבונה הנאהבים	מתי השכל ואנשי
וזרזף ארץ רביבי	וגשמי גשם נדבות	הלא טלי טל תחיה
ויראו נוי מחצבי	צבים בהר ישקיפו	במו פי אקרא אלי חו
וגם חומותי סביבי	ניני כי נחמד הוא:	נדיבים קרבו ראו ב
והשקיט רגזי ועצבי	לדוד הוא חברני	יחיאל הילל ובן הוא
בכוחו ערך קרבי	מצודת דוד וציון	ונודע הוא במצודה
עלילה צור משגבי	גדול העצה ורב ה	אבקש בעדו לאלי
בעת יחשד כאבי	בשמחת גילי לרנן	לזכותו לשמוח
אלי כל רואה כתבי	למול קורא ספרי ו	מליצתי אקריבה
רצה הגיוני וניבי	כמו נופת צוף דבש י	דבר פי ימתק לחכו
תחמם נגד שביבי	וגם תלמודי הלא י	ובעל מקרא ומשנה
הלא ידרוך בנתיבי	ותלמיד תועה בשדה	בקולי אקרא לכל רב
עדי בא איש כלבבי	אנוש מאז מלפנים	נתיב ישר לא ידעו

[...]

The last verses of the poem deplore the current state of the Diaspora and express a yearning for Erets Israel. Just as in the Book of Lamentations, Palestine is described as a place of destruction: Jerusalem is in ruins and the temple is in the hands of Gentiles. The disgraced daughter of Zion calls for the return of the Jews to Palestine and the expulsion of the local Arab population:

*[...] I have no helper, my sons are scattered, and I live among the uncircumcised and the unclean (Isaiah 52:1)*

*The measuring line (Jeremiah 31:39) is in my hand, but I stand back when I witness Kedar<sup>770</sup> destroy me*

*In my land, trampling over my Temple courtyard and ruling over all my stores of gold*

*My God, who performs miracles, who divides the seas and says to the deep: 'be dry' (Isaiah 44: 27),*

*See my disgrace, for I have been perpetually abused, and my sorrow is constant, from morning to night*

*Look at the daughter of Zion who is soiled/loathed; my heart makes so bold as to raise up my lance, my bow and my sword*

*To swiftly drive out the son of the maidservant<sup>771</sup> from my dwelling place, so that no Arabian pitch shall tent there (Isaiah 13:20).<sup>772</sup>*

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<sup>770</sup> Kedar - son of Ishmael.

<sup>771</sup> Ishmael, Hagar's son.

<sup>772</sup>

[...]

וטמא שוכן בקרבי	נפוצים המה וערל	ואין עוזר לי ובני
חזה קדר מחריבי	ואסוג אחור בעת א	וקן המדה בידי



In contrast to Lamentations and the Book of Ezekiel, Dubno does not present the exile of the people of Israel and the destruction of the Temple as the punishments for Israel's sins. The daughter of Zion is a victim of Gentile invaders and her redemption depends on the moral standards of the Jews. Dubno again expressed resistance to Gentile culture<sup>773</sup> in his introductory poem to *Sefer maḥberet tofet ve-eden u-maḥberet Purim* by Immanuel Solomon,<sup>774</sup> a work which was modelled on Dante's *Divine Comedy*. It recounts the narrator's visit to hell and paradise, where he is guided by his deceased friend, Daniel.

Dubno also expressed his interest in Sephardic poetry by composing *Shir kashur min me'ah yetedot* [A poem made out of one hundred units<sup>775</sup>], in which he imitated the quantitative meter system of medieval Hebrew poetry from Andalusian Spain, where the rhythm is determined by the length of time that is needed to recite a line, which, in turn, depends on the number of long and short vowels, and of open and closed syllables in each verse. A fixed number of these constituted a metrical foot (*amud*). This type of metrical system was first

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עלי אדמתי ורומס	חצר מקדשי ומושל	בכל מכמני זהבי
אלהי עושה גדולות	וגוזר ים לגזרים	לצולה אומר חרבי
ראה חרפתי אשר	חרפוני תמיד וצערי	בכל עת קומי ושכבי
חזה בת ציון געולה	לבבי רהב לעורר	חניתי קשתי וחרבי
ובן האמה אגרש	מהרה מבית מלוני	ולא יהל שם ערבי

<sup>773</sup> "Do not learn the ways of the nations" - Jeremiah 10:2; "Go away, leave the Amalekites" - 1 Sam 15:6.

"אל תלמדו אל דרכי גוים / סרו רדו מתוך עמלקי"

<sup>774</sup> Immanuel Solomon, *Sefer maḥberet tofet ve-eden u-maḥberet Purim* (Berlin: 1778), 35a.

<sup>775</sup> Solomon Dubno, "Shir kashur min me'ah yetedot", *Zion*, vol. 2, 17–18.

introduced in the tenth century by the Andalusian Hebrew poet Dunash Ben Labrath, who took as a model the quantitative meter of Arabic poetry. But since in Hebrew the distinction between the length of vowels is not as prominent as in Arabic, Dunash had to devise a somewhat different system of determining the length and nature of a syllable. In this scheme, a “yated” (a ‘peg’ to which a vowel would be ‘tied’) is a longer syllable containing two units, of which the first one is a mobile *sheva* or *ḥataf*, followed by a vowel, which may be either short or long. The other type of syllable is the *tenu’ah* consisting of a single vowel, which, again, may be either short or long.<sup>776</sup> In *Shir kashur min me’ah yetedot*, attempting to imitate the Andalusian quantitative meter system, Dubno would resort, if necessary, to splitting a word between two hemistichs of a line in order to maintain a metrical foot.

In the poem, the narrator advises a young man on how to live his life in happiness, piety, and righteousness. As we learn from an editorial comment at the end of the poem, it had never been published before but remained in manuscript until, after Dubno's death, a copy of it was sent to the periodical *Zion*. The sender of the poem was named by the periodical as ‘Zamerhoysen of Brussels’, who can be identified as Zvi Hirsch Sommerhausen (1781-1853), a German Jew who lived in Amsterdam and Brussels, was a member of the Tongeleth society and established a Jewish school in Brussels with Dutch

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<sup>776</sup> Galili Shahaar, “The Silent Syllable: On Franz Rosenzweig’s Translation of Yehuda Halevi’s Liturgical Poems” in: Ilit Ferber, Paula Schwebel (eds), *Lament in Jewish Thought: Philosophical, Theological, and Literary Perspectives* (Berlin; Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2014), 160; Peter Cole, *The Dream of the Poem: Hebrew Poetry from Muslim and Christian Spain, 950-1492* (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007), 535.

language as one of its primary subjects.<sup>777</sup> The poem he sent to the *Zion* consists of ten verses containing ten syllables each, which are divided into two columns (not reflected in the translation). Once again, the initial letters form an acrostic serving Dubno as his signature, “Solomon ben Yoel”. A number of expressions in *Shir kashur min me’ah yetedot* were taken from the Book of Deuteronomy, in which Moses gives the commandments to the Israelites before they enter Canaan:

*Hear, my son, a piece of advice from your beloved, your friend which is as your own soul (Deuteronomy 13:6).*

*Learn to serve the God who created you, who benefits you at all times.*

*Avoid the fool’s path and the proximity of the man who will entice you to [do] evil.*

*For surely, you will be rewarded in the end and reap your harvest (Deuteronomy 24:19)?*

*When you lie down and when you get up, pour out your heart to God, your creator.*

*Let go of your anger and display your good will to all men.*

*Hold your father and mother dear, and provide them with the best of your clothing.*

*Recompense them according to their actions [for your benefit] with your drink and your food.*

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<sup>777</sup> Bart Wallet, “Belgian Independence, Orangism, and Jewish Identity. The Jewish Communities in Belgium during the Belgian Revolution (1830-39)” in David J. Wertheim, Judith Frishman, Ido de Haan (eds), *Borders and Boundaries in and around Dutch Jewish History* (Amsterdam: Aksant, 2011), 173-179; Zwiép, “Religion, Culture (and Nation)”, 251-252.

*Eat and drink with joy, and give to the poor.*

*As regards everything that I command to you (Deuteronomy 13:1), listen, my son, to the advice of your beloved.*<sup>778</sup>

Dubno's experiments with Andalusian-style poetry may seem at odds with the plot of *Yuval ve-Na'aman*, which conveys the image of a direct transition from biblical to eighteenth-century Dutch Hebrew poetry, without taking into account the Iberian poetical heritage. The fact that he tried to imitate not only the biblical poetry, but also the Andalusian quantitative meter system, points to his wish to explore different methods of composing Hebrew verses. While Dubno had a versatile interest in Hebrew poetry and was able to appreciate different styles and genres, the message transmitted in *Yuval ve-Na'aman* suggests that he considered the biblical lyrics the pinnacle of achievement in the field of Hebrew poetry.

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<sup>778</sup> See the scan of the printed version of the poem in appendix no. 3.

ורעך אשר כנפשך	שמע בני עצת אהובך
אשר בכל זמן יטיבך	למוד עבוד לאל בראך
אנוש אשר לרע יסיתך	מנע נתיב אויל וקרבת
רך ותקצור קצירך	הלא בסוף תקבלה שכ
לבבך לאל יצרך	בשכבך וקומך שפוך
לכל אנוש פני רצונך	נטוש חרונך והראה
בדם במחלצות לבושך	יקר תנה לאב ואם וכ
תך וגם במאכלך	וגמלם כפעלם במש
ואף תנה לאביונך	אכול וגם שתה בשמחה
שמע בני עצת אהובך	לכל אשר אני מצורך

*Shir na'eh al midat ha-ḥanupah* [A pleasant song on the attribute of flattery],<sup>779</sup> published in *Zion* and in *Bikure to'etet*,<sup>780</sup> belongs to a series of Dubno's didactic poems starting with the same two words, *ani midat* ("I am the attribute of"). The series also includes *Ani midat emet* [I am the attribute of truth] and the *Melitsot* [Poetic phrases].<sup>781</sup> These poems can be viewed as an example of the allegorical parable, in which a human attribute is presented as an anthropomorphised entity whose words and behaviour befit its name.<sup>782</sup> Thus in *Shir na'eh al midat ha-ḥanupah* Dubno presents flattery as a woman who compares herself to a number of female biblical characters. While this type of poetry is not very appealing to the contemporary reader, it dominated maskilic Hebrew literature until the 1840s, as it suited the aesthetic and intellectual taste of traditional Jews who had little access to non-religious literature, and who were targeted by these maskilic poetic endeavours.<sup>783</sup>

The poem seems to imitate the rhyming scheme of Spanish *piyut*, which was influenced by the Arabic *qasida*. There is a number of variations regarding meter and rhyme in this poetic genre, but in its most classic form each verse (*bayit*) is divided into two symmetrical hemistichs (known in Hebrew as the "opening", *delet*, and the "closing", *soger*, and in Arabic as *sadr*, "front", and 'ajouz, "backside"). In the first line of a poem, the last words of the "opening" and

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<sup>779</sup> The standard pronunciation of the Hebrew word for flattery is "ḥanupah". However, for the sake of rhyme, Dubno writes it without a *dagesh* in the letter *peh*, thus changing its spelling to "ḥanufah". See the scan of the printed version of the poem in appendix no. 4.

<sup>780</sup> Solomon Dubno, "Shir na'eh al midat ha-ḥanupah", *Zion* 1 (1841), 64; Hevrat Toelet, *Bikure to'etet* (Amsterdam: J. van Embden, 1820), vol. 1, 115. The poem exists in manuscript as well (not by Dubno's hand) in Biblioteca Rosenthaliana, HS. ROS. PI-B-75.

<sup>781</sup> Solomon Dubno, "Melitsot", *Zion* 2 (1841), 33.

<sup>782</sup> Pelli, "Eleh mishle 'ha-Me'asef", 184 - 185.

<sup>783</sup> Miron, "Rediscovering Haskalah Poetry", 292-296.

“closing” parts rhyme, and all the following final words of the “closing” hemistich end with the same rhyme.<sup>784</sup> A number of Andalusian poets, such as Ibn Gabirol, Moses ibn Ezra, and Yehuda Halevi, composed *qasidas* in Hebrew and replaced Islamic topics with biblical ones. While employing an Arabic literary genre, they wrote their verses in biblical Hebrew, which they believed to be superior to other languages, and whose ancient and allegedly divine origin would allow them to compete with Arab poets, for whom the Quran represented the ultimate literary achievement.<sup>785</sup> Dubno’s *Shir na’eh al midat ha-ḥanupah* has an elaborated rhyming scheme inspired by Spanish *piyut*. Its verses are composed of four equal parts. In the first and last lines, the final words of all the parts rhyme. The same final rhyme appears in the final words of the fourth part in the following verses, while the three other parts have a separate rhyme.

In his description of flattery, Dubno refers to various biblical stories, such as the feigning of good intentions by Laban or the evil deeds committed by Orpah, a Moabite woman married to an Israelite and who, upon becoming a widow, abandoned her widowed mother-in-law, Naomi. In the poem, her behaviour is contrasted with that of Naomi’s other Moabite daughter-in-law, Ruth, who had also lost her husband but who still followed and took care of her mother-in-law, joining the Israelite camp. The use of several biblical analogies was a technique characteristic of the medieval *piyutim* adopted by early maskilim such as Naftali Wessely.<sup>786</sup> The attribute of flattery is not ascribed to any concrete person, and

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<sup>784</sup> Amnon Shiloah, *Jewish Musical Traditions* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995), 114-115.

<sup>785</sup> Beatrice Gruendler, “The Qasida” in: María Rosa Menocal, Raymond P. Scheindlin and Michael Sells (eds), *The Literature of Al-Andalus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 214.

<sup>786</sup> Miron, “Rediscovering Haskalah Poetry”.

the whole poem is a meticulous analysis of various aspects of this particular flaw of character.

*I am the attribute of flattery, most comely and beautiful. All my flour is sifted (Mishnah, Kodashim, Menahot 6:33b.), and my leaves are a cure (Ezekiel 47:12).*

*I employ speech that is elegant, well set out and well-guarded, and whatever I say is refined.*

*My tongue and my mouth are like onyx and jasper, and all my utterances are beautified, like sifted flour.*

[...]

*Moreover, I declare my good intentions (lit. my peace) to all my people, like Laban the Aramean, master of Bilhah and Zilpah.<sup>787</sup>*

*But when I break my covenant to commit murder [within] my community, my speech absolves me like the broken-necked heifer (Deuteronomy 21:6).<sup>788</sup>*

*To honest men I appear like a faithful husband,<sup>789</sup> but I commit adultery with others, such as a bondmaid who is betrothed to a husband.<sup>790</sup>*

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<sup>787</sup> Laban managed to trick Jacob into marrying Leah instead of her younger sister, Rachel. According to Rashi, he achieved this by replacing Leah with Zilpah, a young handmaid, during the wedding night. See Rashi's commentary on Genesis 30:10.

<sup>788</sup> Dubno alludes to the ritual of sacrificing a heifer by priests in order to atone for an unsolved murder. See Deuteronomy 21:1-21:9.

<sup>789</sup> *ba'al ne'urim* - a husband married by a woman in her youth.

<sup>790</sup> *Shifḥah ḥarufah* is the Talmudic term for the biblical "*shifḥah neḥerefet*." The term refers to a female slave who was betrothed but committed adultery with another man. The woman would not be punished, as she was not a free person, but the man had to make atonement through a guilt offering. See: Leviticus 19:20-19:22.

*I seem to be modest like Shiphrah and Puah<sup>791</sup> and my shirt is torn<sup>792</sup> as a mark of a shame and disgrace (Isaiah 30:5).*

*I conceal my guilt from my brethren and my people (1 Chronicles 28:2) and I justify myself like Naomi while committing evil like Orpah.*

[...]

*My righteousness is sealed, and my window closed (Mishnah, Oholot 13:1). My burning coal is covered with ashes and my stove is swept clean (Mishnah, Shabbat, 20a).<sup>793</sup>*

*Standing upright, I surely do proclaim: I am the attribute of flattery, most comely and beautiful.*

*I, the poet, [wrote this] in order to encourage all hearts not to follow its ways and to stay clear of its paths.<sup>794</sup>*

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<sup>791</sup> Shiphrah and Puah were the two midwives who disobeyed pharaoh's order to kill all male Hebrew newborns. See: Exodus 1:15-1:20.

<sup>792</sup> Allusion to the dress of Joseph, which his brothers, having torn and tainted it with blood, brought to Jacob as proof of his death.

<sup>793</sup> This verse alludes to a passage in the Mishnah which discusses roasting meat on Shabbat eve. According to Rabbi Hananyah, it is permitted to keep meat on the stove if it is already partially cooked, even though the stove is not swept clean and the coals are not extinguished.

<sup>794</sup> See the scan of the printed version of the poem in appendices no. 4. and 5.

אני מדת חנופה מאוד נאוה ויפה וכל סלתי מנופה ועלי לתרופה.

ולי שפה ברורה ויפה הדורה ערוכה גם שמורה ואמרת צרופה.

ולי לשון וגם פה כמו שהם וישפה וכל ניבי איפה כמו סלת מנופה.

[...]

וגם עם כל לאמי אדבר את שלומי כלבן הארמי אדון בלהה וזלפה.

ועת אפר בריתי לרצח עדתי אכפר בשפתי כמו עגלה ערופה.

ואדמה לכשרים אלי בעל נעורים ואזנה עם אחרים כמו שפחה חרופה.

ואתראה צנועה כמו שפרה ופועה וכתנתי קרועה לבושת גם לחרפה.



Besides writing didactic poetry, Dubno copied a number of works by other authors,<sup>795</sup> including the parody *Masekhet Purim Yerushalmi* [The Jerusalem Talmud's tractate Purim] by David Franco Mendes, to which Dubno added a riddle of his own.<sup>796</sup> It is the only poem by Dubno which does not have a didactic message, as it was meant for pure entertainment associated with the celebration of Purim. The first stanza of the riddle describes three brothers who stick together. The first two are twins, and the third one is taller than the two others taken together. All three are asked to bring joy to the Jews. The solution of the riddle is *yayin* (wine), which in Hebrew is written with two small letters (*yud*) and one long one (the final *nun*).<sup>797</sup> The remaining four stanzas of the riddle describe in a humorous way the positive influence of alcohol on people.

Dubno's poetry reveals no trace of non-Jewish poetic influence and indeed, his booklist suggests that he was either unfamiliar with this literature or else that he thought it inappropriate to refer to it. This may have resulted from lack of interest or, more likely, from the inaccessibility of non-Hebrew poetry to the less acculturated maskilim who were not fully fluent in modern European languages. This is suggested by the fact that there were no Hebrew or Yiddish

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לעין אחי ועמי      אכסה את אשמי      ואצטדק לנעמי      אבל ארשע כערפה.

[...]

וצדקתי חתומה      וחלוני סתומה      וגחלתי קטומה      וכירתי גרופה.

ועם קומה זקופה      הלא אקרא בשפה      אני מדת חנופה      מאד נאווה ויפה.

אנכי המשורר, לבבות לעורר, בלי ללכת בארחותיה, ולהתרחק מנתיבותיה,

שלמה במהור"ר יואל ז"ל מדובנא רבתי יע"א

<sup>795</sup> See the chapter "Solomon Dubno's booklists".

<sup>796</sup> Mendes, *Masekhet Purim Yerushalmi*.

<sup>797</sup> Somerhausen, *Literaturblatt des Orients*, 181-182.

translations of the most renowned works by German Enlightenment authors among the publications targeted at the Jewish public. Despite their popularity in Gentile society, none of the poems by Schiller or Goethe were ever published in *Ha-Me'asef*, and only a few verses by Lessing were translated into Hebrew.<sup>798</sup> According to Klausner, this state of affairs resulted from the chasm between the Haskalah and *Aufklärung*, as well as the linguistic deficiency of Hebrew writers who were unable to pen satisfactory translations from German.<sup>799</sup> By contrast, Moshe Pelli believes that the maskilim preferred to popularise the works of the previous generation of European authors, such as Herder, who had already been recognised as belonging to the European literary canon.<sup>800</sup> Another possible explanation is that poetry written by non-Jewish authors was not felt to be didactic enough for the purpose of the early Haskalah, which aimed every publication to encourage self-improvement or to demonstrate the aesthetic qualities of the Hebrew language.

Taking into account the abundance of scholarly and biblical references in Dubno's works, one can assume that he expected his readers to have a traditional Jewish education and to be well-versed in Scripture and rabbinic literature. Some of his poems, such as *Kol simḥah*, were intended to be performed at public events, while others might have been presented at meetings of Amsterdam literary circles, where they would be read to other attendees.<sup>801</sup> By alluding to other works, a poet could present his erudition and craftsmanship in composing Hebrew verses.

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<sup>798</sup> Moshe Pelli, *Sha'ar la-haskalah: mafte'ah mu'ar le-ha-me'asef, ketav-ha-et ha-ivri ha-rishon (544-571)* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2000), 114.

<sup>799</sup> Klausner, *Historiah shel ha-sifrut ha-ivrit ha-ḥadashah*, vol. 1, 155.

<sup>800</sup> Pelli, "These are the words of the great pundit...", 109.

<sup>801</sup> Zwiep, "Jewish Enlightenment Reconsidered", 285-286.

Intertextuality was an important part of the literary output of both Amsterdam Jewish literati and the German Haskalah. According to Tova Cohen, referring to other texts is of particular importance when reading maskilic literature, since the followers of Haskalah usually had an in-depth knowledge of the Jewish literary heritage, resulting from the religious education that they acquired in childhood. Consequently, the maskilic author knew how to appeal to his Jewish public and understood its way of thinking, as he shared the intellectual background of the non-maskilic reader. Thanks to their extensive traditional education, the Haskalah writers, did not treat the canonical Jewish texts as if they were lifeless monuments of the past; rather, they recognized that these texts lent themselves to topical reinterpretation and provided a rich source of inspiration for their own literary output. Moreover, Cohen insists that maskilic writers aimed at a “simultaneous reading” of their literary output, whereby the reader juxtaposed the maskilic and the biblical texts in order to fully understand any Haskalah poem.<sup>802</sup>

In his poetry Dubno employed the maskilic method of writing, *melitsah*, incorporating in his verses scriptural, liturgical and rabbinic phrases copied verbatim from his sources. He attached a great deal of significance to the form of his verses, in which he displayed his mastery of the poetic craft by employing assonances (repetitions of similar sounds). His often untitled poems are usually preceded by a short prose description containing information on, for example, the number of syllables in each line or the total number of verses. Often, the poems

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<sup>802</sup> Tova Cohen, “The Maskil as Lamdan: the Influence of Jewish Education on Haskalah Writing Techniques” in: Glenda Abramson; Tudor Parfitt (eds), *Jewish Education and Learning* (Chur, Switzerland: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1994), 61-73; Tova Cohen, “Ha-tekhnikah ha-lamdanit—tsofen shel sifrut ha-haskalah,” *Mehkere yerushalayim be-sifrut ivrit* 13 (1992), 137-169.

would feature an acrostic - either following the order of the Hebrew alphabet or revealing the author's name. In other to make the writing of the acrostics easier for himself, he would often start his poems in the same way, with words that begin with the initial letter of his name, "*shin*".<sup>803</sup> The verses are often arranged in columns, with an even number of syllables in each verse, giving them a visually aesthetic and orderly appearance.

Dubno often resorted to rhymes in his poems, a technique which was criticised by Heidenheim in *Maḥzor sefer kerovot*, the very publication for which Dubno had provided his approbation. According to Heidenheim, rhyme and lofty subject matters cannot be present in the same poem. He emphasised that rhyme was not typical of Hebrew liturgy, which is why it does not appear for example in the Book of Psalms. Consequently, Heidenheim regarded it as an extraneous feature acquired during the Diaspora experience and introduced into Hebrew poetry only after the Jews went into exile.<sup>804</sup>

The number of verses in Dubno's poems is often significant, e.g. in the introduction to *Melitsot* he explains that the poem is composed of 26 stanzas, which correspond to the numerical value of the Tetragrammaton.<sup>805</sup> Every stanza consists of two verses divided into two parts, and the first part of each first line always rhymes with the second line, as do the second parts of both lines. Every

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<sup>803</sup> Compare, for example, poems that begin with the word "*se'u*" (written with the letter *sin* which, after ignoring the punctuation, can be read as *shin*), such as *Se'u einekhem* ["Lift up your eyes"], *Evel Yahid*, and his introductory poem to Solomon Chelm's *Sha'are ne'imah*. Similarly, his introductory poem to Immanuel Solomon's *Sefer maḥberet tofet ve-eden* starts with "*sham'u*" ("listen" in the plural), and his *Shir kashur min me'ah yetedot* - with "*shem'a*" ("listen" in singular). See: Dubno, *Evel yahid*, second page (unpaginated); Altschuler, *Binyan ha-bayit*, 2; Chelm, *Sha'are ne'imah*, page 2 (unpaginated), Dubno, *Shir kashur min me'ah yetedot*, 17; Solomon, *Sefer maḥberet tofet ve-eden u-maḥberet Purim*, 35a.

<sup>804</sup> Heidenheim, *Sefer kerovot*, 10-20.

<sup>805</sup> Solomon Dubno, "Melitsot", *Zion* 2 (1841), 33.

part comprises nine syllables and “there is no *sheva* at all, either mobile or resting.”<sup>806</sup> This poetic technique points to Dubno’s wish to impress with his craftsmanship than to his lyrical inspiration. His elaboration on the structural qualities of this poem is preceded by a brief summary of its contents, succinctly stating that it praises modesty and criticises pride. The initial letters of each stanza form his name, “Solomon ben Yoel of Dubno”, and in addition, the initial letters of the first four sentences make up the name “Solomon.”

In the anthology *Bikure to’elet* Dubno’s poems were described as “pleasant, very sublime”<sup>807</sup> and “of great value and very beautiful”,<sup>808</sup> and he himself was said to have been endowed with talent by God but appreciated by his coreligionists only posthumously.<sup>809</sup> However, while some scholars praised Dubno’s poems for dealing with Jewish topics and alluding to both biblical and medieval form,<sup>810</sup> others questioned their artistic merit.<sup>811</sup> Most notably, his *Birkat Yosef* [The Blessing of Joseph] (Dyhernfurth: 1783), dedicated to Yosef Pesseles who supported him financially in Vilna,<sup>812</sup> was severely criticised in *Ha-Me’asef*.<sup>813</sup> The anonymous reviewer mocked the antiquarian substance of *Birkat Yosef*. After quoting a passage in which Dubno describes his meticulous work on

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“ואין השוא בכלל לא הנע ולא הנח.”

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“שירים ערבים, מאוד נשגבים.”

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“השירים האלה לגודל ערכם ורב יפים (...).”

<sup>809</sup> *Bikure to’elet*, vol. 1 (1820), introduction, 3 (no pagination).

<sup>810</sup> Franz Delitzsch, *Zur Geschichte der jüdischen Poesie: vom Abschluss der heiligen Schriften Alten Bunde bis auf die neueste Zeit* (Leipzig: Karl Tauchnitz, 1836), 118.

<sup>811</sup> Zinberg, *A History of Jewish Literature. The Berlin Haskalah*, 40-41. Graetz described Dubno’s Hebrew works as “not entirely bad” (“Dubno hat auch einige nicht ganz schlechte hebr. Werke (sic) gemacht.”) Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden* (Leipzig: Oskar Leiner, 1870), vol. 11, 42, n. 3.

<sup>812</sup> Kamenetsky, “Haskamot gedole ha-rabanim”, 764, 772.

<sup>813</sup> “Mishpat al sefer ḥadash”, 47-48.

the Masorah, he comments: "Perhaps in time, the philologists will take pleasure in this work, they will not believe that it was newly written in our own times but say that it is an ancient piece of writing."<sup>814</sup> Indeed, as a maskil who was interested in the literary renewal of Hebrew as a vehicle for Enlightenment ideas, he considered Dubno's highly technical work on the ancient Masoretic emendations expendable and irrelevant to the goals of Haskalah. Warning the readers that they would find much 'blather' (*lahag*) in *Birkat Yosef*, he derided both Dubno and his patrons: "Happy are the lovers of Torah and its scholars! And happy are those who sustain its learners and its scribes!"<sup>815</sup>

A few explanations can be given for this unfavourable review. First of all, since Dubno's compositions echo his accusations of financial impropriety by an unnamed fellow participant in the Biur project who could be identified as Mendelssohn, it may well be that the harsh criticism of his work was due to defensive resentment on the part of the German maskilim. Klausner believed that this scathing critique was revenge for Dubno's withdrawal from the Haskalah and should be interpreted as a satire on Polish Jews.<sup>816</sup> Secondly, the discrepancy in reception of Dubno's work by *Ha-Me'asef and Bikure to'elet* can be explained by the different nature of the German Haskalah and Dutch Jewish intellectual interests. Just as with the Berlin maskilim, Dubno regarded Hebrew as a viable means of artistic expression and devoted his life to its popularisation among the Jewish population. However, the content of his works was more traditional than

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"ואולי ברבות הימים ישמחו אנשי הפילולוגיה בגליון זה, לא יאמינו כי זה דבר חדש הנעשה בימינו אך יאמרו ישן נושן הוא (...)."

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"אשרי אהבי תורה והוגיה! ואשרי מחזיקי לומדיה וסופריה!"

<sup>816</sup> Klausner, *Historyah shel ha-sifrut ha-ivrit ha-ḥadashah*, vol. 1, 157.

what was expected by *Ha-Me'asef* and it stemmed from Dubno's worldview that was more strongly marked by his religious beliefs than the views of his Prussian contemporaries. By contrast, Dubno's style of writing, deemed antiquarian by German maskilim, was still appealing to Dutch Jewish intellectuals, who tended to be more conservative and who cultivated Hebrew without resorting to ideology that was advocated by the German Haskalah.<sup>817</sup> This again points to different origins of Hebrew literary activity in Amsterdam and Berlin: phenomena that were new to German Jewry and formed the basis of maskilic programme, such as study of Hebrew, modern languages and secular branches of knowledge, were an intrinsic part of the culture of Amsterdam Jewry, who were characterised by the cultural openness of port Jews without rejecting Jewish literary heritage that seemed outdated to German maskilim.<sup>818</sup>

In *Ha-Me'asef*, Dubno was also ridiculed because of his Polish origins: “[Human] *attributes change in line with the nature of each country and its manners* [emphasis in the original]. Since his [Dubno's] return to his land and his homeland, it seems that a different spirit has been speaking through him.”<sup>819</sup> Moreover, the reviewer accuses Dubno of plagiarising Wessely's *Mahalal Re'a* [Praise for a Friend], and reprints a few verses by Dubno as proof of this allegation. Indeed, the first verse of Dubno's poem, “Eternal joy, religious fervour, you light up the world”,<sup>820</sup> is strikingly similar to the beginning of Wessely's work

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<sup>817</sup> Zwiép, “An Echo of Lofty Mountains,” 295-296.

<sup>818</sup> David Sorkin, “The Port Jew. Notes toward a Social Type”, *Journal of Jewish Studies* 50.1 (1999), 94.

<sup>819</sup>

“המדות ישתנו לפי טבעי המדינות ונימוסיהן, כי מאז שב האיש אל ארצו ואל מולדתו, נדמה כי רוח אחרת דבר בו.”  
<sup>820</sup> Dubno, “Birkat Yosef” in: Kamenetsky, “Haskamot...”, *Yeshurun* 10, 774.

“שמחת עולם אש דת, תבל תאירי”

- "Eternal splendour, fervour of religion! You light up the darkness."<sup>821</sup> However, the rest of the two poems bears no such resemblance, and it seems that the reviewer might have taken advantage of the similarity between the opening lines of each of the poems in order to disparage Dubno's reputation as a poet. While the beginning of Dubno's poem might have been inspired by *Mahalal Re'a*, it is also possible that the similarity stems from pure coincidence or was perhaps intended as an intertextual quotation. The expression *esh dat*, "fervour of religion" (also translatable as "fiery law"), comes from Deuteronomy 33:2 and was discussed in the Palestinian Talmud (Shekalim 6:1) and *Sefer netivot ha-shalom*.<sup>822</sup> Furthermore, the motif of light and the illumination of darkness, which stems from the biblical story of creation, was very common in traditional, Jewish thought, where it often denoted the struggle between good and evil in the universe.<sup>823</sup> At the same time, it was a popular symbol in the Enlightenment imaginary, where it served as an allegory of progress and the elimination of ignorance, as reflected in the very name of the epoch.<sup>824</sup> For this reason, it should not be surprising that this motif appeared in the poetry of both Wessely and Dubno.

Almost all of Dubno's poems were composed in his youth. He later refrained from writing poetry "because I have grown old and all the daughters of poetry have bent down their heads in sorrow, and it is no longer my wish to marry

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<sup>821</sup> Wessely, "Mahalal Re'a" in: GSJ, vol. 15.1, 10.

"יפעת עולם אש דת! אפל תגיהי"

<sup>822</sup> See: GSJ, vol. 18, 528.

<sup>823</sup> See for example: Elliot R. Wolfson, "Light through Darkness: the Ideal of Human Perfection in the Zohar", *Harvard Theological Review* 81.1 (1988), 73-95.

<sup>824</sup> Rolf Reichardt, Deborah Louise Cohen, "Light against Darkness: The Visual Representations of a Central Enlightenment Concept", *Representations*, no. 61, special issue: *Practices of Enlightenment* (Winter 1998), 95-148.



them.”<sup>825</sup> Despite his dedication to poetry, grammar, and biblical exegesis, Dubno believed these fields to be only of secondary importance. In his *haskamah* to Heidenheim’s *Maḥzor* he expressed his surprise at the honour that he was accorded:

“Haven’t the famous rabbis, whose little finger is thicker than my thigh (1 Kings 12:10), already approved of and desired his [Heidenheim’s] work? So how can someone of such little value as me come to complete their words? Nor is it appropriate for me to write the approbation, because I am not one of the rabbis. The composition of poetry and songs is appropriate for a poet and grammarian, while for rabbis it is appropriate to write approbations. And how much greater is the power of a *haskamah*! It will not only glorify the book, but it will also decree against and punish all trespassers. By contrast, poetry pleasantly praises the book and blesses its author; it contains no decree, no command, and no warning.”<sup>826</sup>

In other words, according to Dubno, poetry is valuable mainly because of its aesthetic features and is therefore inferior to rabbinical scholarship. However, in his *Kol simḥah*, published in 1780, he presents a different view: God himself is said to direct the heart of a person towards poetry, which is presented as a means of transmitting wisdom. These two contradictory opinions on poetry may suggest

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<sup>825</sup> Heidenheim, *Sefer kerovot*, 6a.

“(...) כי כבר זקנתי, וישחו כל בנות השיר, ואין רצוני עוד להתחתן בהן.”

<sup>826</sup> *Ibid.*

“הלא הרבנים המפורסמים אשר קטנם עבה ממתני כבד הסכימו ורצו את מעשיו, ואיך יבוא קטן הערך כמוני למלאות דבריהם, גם לא יאות לי ההסכמה, כי אינני מרבני העם, כי למליץ ומדקדק יאות השירה והזמרה, ולרבנים יאות ההסכמה, וכמה גדול מהשירה, כי מלבד שתפאר את החבור, עוד תגזור ותענוש למשיגי גבול, לא כן השירה. כי דברה בנחת לשבח את הספר ולברך את המחבר, אין בה לא גזירה, לא ציוי ולא אזהרה.”

that Dubno's stance has changed over time, or that the apparent devaluation of poetry expressed in his *haskamah* was no more than a sarcastic show of false modesty.

### **Works wrongly attributed to Dubno**

Dubno's literary output consisted mostly of works in the fields of grammar, biblical commentary, and poetry. However, since he was a reputed scholar, famous for his impressive library and interest in science and philosophy, a number of manuscripts dating from his lifetime have been wrongly ascribed to him. He had also been accused by a number of scholars of committing plagiarism by publishing *Ahavat Tsiyon* - a book on Palestine, although there is no evidence of his involvement in this enterprise. At the same time, as discussed above, a number of historians have expressed doubt as to his authorship of the Biur prospectus, *Alim li-terufah*, claiming that credit for the work should go principally to Mendelssohn, while Dubno served chiefly as his stooge, whose sole function was to obscure Mendelssohn's own involvement in the publication.<sup>827</sup> A few works were incorrectly ascribed to Dubno by librarians in Amsterdam, as they deal with the matters of halakhah, science, and Sabbateanism, subjects that were of interest to Dubno and on which he owned several books. Since Dubno had a traditional religious education and an interest in secular sciences, and was an admirer of Jacob Emden, who accused Jonathan Eybeschütz of being a member of the Sabbatean sect, he could have potentially composed those works, so the

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<sup>827</sup> See "Dubno and the publication of the Biur" chapter. Altmann, *Mendelssohn*, 820, n. 52; GSJ, vol. 14, viii.

assumption on the part of Fuks and Fuks-Mansfeld that Dubno authored these works was not unreasonable.<sup>828</sup> Furthermore, all the three works, discussed below, were composed with an aim to popularise knowledge among the Jewish population, a goal, which was in line with Dubno's aspirations.

The first two incorrectly attributed works to be discussed are two manuscripts that are stored in the Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana in Amsterdam: *Kelale isur ve-heter bi-shehitah*<sup>829</sup> [The Rules of Ritual Slaughte] and *Hibur al ha-tekhunah, ha-filosofyah ve-ha-mistorin*<sup>830</sup> [A Treatise on Astrology, Philosophy and Esoteric Matters]. The author of the first work explains that he composed it in response to the widespread ignorance of the laws of kashrut. He also wished to clarify more complex questions concerning the *halakhah*, which he had posed to some rabbinic authorities who were unable to provide a unanimous answer. He does not claim that his views are the only correct ones, and he is happy to accept any other opinion that might be closer to the truth. The treatise contains many practical instructions and is intended for readers who do not have an in-depth knowledge of the *halakhah*. The author therefore explains all the technical terms used in his work. One of the reasons for composing the work may have been the difficult situation of the Ashkenazi community in Amsterdam, where the quality of kosher meat was often poor and where high prices made it accessible only to the rich. Consequently, widespread buying of smuggled meat on the black

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<sup>828</sup> Fuks; Fuks-Mansfeld, *Hebrew and Judaic Manuscripts*, 57, 122; Lajb Fuks, Renate G. Fuks-Mansfeld, *Hebrew and Judaic Manuscripts in Amsterdam Public Collections*, vol. 2, *Catalogue of the Manuscripts of Ets Haim / Livraria Montezinos Shephardic Community of Amsterdam* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 210.

<sup>829</sup> *Kelale isur ve-heter bi-shehitah*, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana in Amsterdam, HS. ROS. 268.

<sup>830</sup> *Hibur al ha-tekhunah, ha-filosofyah ve-ha-mistorin* (ab. 1780), Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana, HS. ROS. 577.

market without kashrut certificates became a major problem for the Amsterdam *parnasim* (community board).<sup>831</sup> Although the treatise was certainly written in Dubno's times, it bears no signature and was ascribed to Solomon Dubno solely on the basis of the alleged similarity of his hand-writing to that of the author of the treatise.<sup>832</sup> The clear, concise style of the work on ritual slaughter however departs significantly from Dubno's style of writing, which is usually charged with *melitsot* and hyperboles.

The latter manuscript, *Hibur al ha-tekhunah, ha-filosofyah ve-ha-mistorin* was attributed to Solomon Dubno because his name appears on the spine of the binding.<sup>833</sup> While as far as we know, Dubno never expressed any wish to compose a scientific treatise, the contents of the work is compatible with his knowledge of science and religious literature. Furthermore, the author of the manuscript evokes sources that were known to Dubno and often quoted by him, such as works by Maimonides and Abraham ibn Ezra. The treatise itself deals primarily with astrology and the natural sciences, and it largely comprises an interpretation of the Books of Genesis and Job, as well as of some rabbinical *agadot* and *Sefer yetsirah*. It was certainly composed by an educated, religious Jew who had a good knowledge of Hebrew. Nevertheless, there is no evidence that it was penned by Dubno. A comparison of this scientific treatise to other

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<sup>831</sup> Tsila Rådecker, "Uniting and Dividing. Social Aspects of the Eighteenth-Century Ashkenazi Meat Hall in Amsterdam", *Zutot* 7.1 (2010), 81-88; Belinfante, "The Ideal of Jewish Tradition", 220.

<sup>832</sup> Cf., however, Dubno's letter to Moses Mendelssohn dated September 22, 1780 (Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana, HS. ROS. 174). His hand-writing is characterised by a narrow, vertical *shin*, a circular *khaf*, *peh* with a long "roof" and a short base, and a slanting *bet* with the end of the letter placed below the line. By contrast, *Kelale isur ve-heter bi-shehitah* was written with a slanting, stretched out *shin*, *khaf* with an elongated base, a *peh* that is wide at the base and has a loop, and a straight *bet* written on the line.

<sup>833</sup> Fuks; Fuks-Mansfeld, *Hebrew and Judaic Manuscripts*, 57.

manuscripts composed by him reveals several differences in the style of the hand-writing.<sup>834</sup> It is more likely that he owned a copy of the manuscript, but did not author it himself.

Another anonymous manuscript attributed to Dubno is a copy of a Hebrew translation from Yiddish of *Bashraybung fun Shabsai Tsvi*, a book composed in 1718 by Leib ben Ozer (d. 1727) in Amsterdam.<sup>835</sup> The author strove to deliver an objective description of the life of Sabbatai ben Zevi (1626-1676), the seventeenth-century pseudo-messiah, whose antinomian behaviour and challenge to established Judaism became highly controversial. After being denounced as an imposter and rabble-rouser by a delegate of the Polish-Lithuanian Council of Four Lands, Sabbatai Zevi was arrested by the Ottoman authorities, and in order to avoid the death sentence, he converted to Islam in 1666. While the messianic frenzy he had inspired abated significantly after his conversion, a considerable number of his followers continued to believe in his eschatological role, and formed sectarian communities in the Ottoman Empire and in East-Central Europe, which operated clandestinely throughout the eighteenth century and beyond.<sup>836</sup> Leib ben Ozer based his account on written documents and oral reports of the events, and he warned against those Sabbateans who claimed to have undergone prophetic and mystical experiences.<sup>837</sup>

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<sup>834</sup> In a personal communication, David Kamenetsky expressed his firm opinion that the manuscript was not written in Dubno's hand.

<sup>835</sup> Fuks, Fuks-Mansfeld, *Hebrew and Judaic Manuscripts*, vol. 2, 210. Ets Hayim Library, cat. no. EH 47 E 27 01. Paul Ira Radensky, "Leyb Ben Ozer's 'Bashraybung Fun Shabsai Tsvi': An Ashkenazic Appropriation of Sabbatianism", *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 88.1/2 (Jul. - Oct., 1997), 44.

<sup>836</sup> On Sabbateanism, see: Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi: the Mystical Messiah, 1626-1676* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973).

<sup>837</sup> Harris Lenowitz, *The Jewish Messiahs: From the Galilee to Crown Heights* (Oxford University Press, 1998), 152.

There is no doubt that the manuscript, stored in the library of Ets Hayim in Amsterdam, was not written by Dubno. Besides the fact that the hand-writing differs from all other samples of manuscripts written in Dubno's hand, the note on the front page of the document states that the copy was completed in 1754 in Amsterdam. At that time Dubno was only sixteen-year-old and still living in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, arriving in the Netherlands only thirteen years later. Furthermore, Dubno opposed the use of Yiddish and composed his works exclusively in Hebrew.<sup>838</sup>

We know from Dubno's commentary on the Book of Genesis that he intended to compose a treatise devoted to the geography of Palestine, which was to be entitled *Kuntres Aharon*. Levinsohn believes that Dubno had intended *Kuntres Aharon* to be an integral part of *Sefer netivot ha-shalom*. However, since he abandoned the project, the work was never completed. While Polak expresses a similar opinion, Friedberg erroneously claims that *Kuntres Aharon*, which he describes as a geographical work by Solomon Dubno, was published in Berlin in 1749-1750 (Dubno was born only twelve years earlier, in 1738). Zeitlin, too, includes this work in his bibliography, albeit without specifying a date of publication.<sup>839</sup>

It is not known whether this work has been lost or whether it was in fact printed later under the title *Ahavat Tsiyon*.<sup>840</sup> A large part of the latter publication

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<sup>838</sup> Solomon Dubno's *haskamah* in: Heidenheim, *Sefer kerovot*, 4a-6b.

<sup>839</sup> Shlomo Levinsohn, *Mehkere Erets* (Vienna: Georg Holzinger, 1819), introduction, 2-3 (unpaginated). Polak, *Ben Gorni*, 41-42. Bernard Friedberg, *Bet eked sefarim: leksikon bibliyografi* (Antwerp: 1928-1931), 544-545. William Zeitlin, *Kiryat Sefer. Bibliotheca Hebraica post-Mendelssohniana. Bibliographisches Handbuch der neuhebräischen Literatur, seit Beginn der Mendelssohn'schen Epoche bis zum Jahre 1880* (Leipzig: Koehler, 1891-1895), 69.

<sup>840</sup> *Ahavat Tsiyon* (Grodno: 1789/1790) was later reprinted by Hayim Eliezer Hausdorf under the title *Doresh Tsiyon* (1887). Carmoly and Eisenstein refer to Dubno's book on

was written by Dubno's father-in-law, Simha ben Joshua Haas of Zloczow, who had spent seven months in Palestine in 1764, wrote an account of his journey entitled *Sipure Erets ha-Galil*, while staying in Livorno, and eventually returned to Poland, where he died in Brailow in 1768.<sup>841</sup>

Dubno owned a copy of his father-in-law's work, which is mentioned in his book catalogue of 1771 but does not appear in his booklist of 1814. In *Ahavat Tsiyon*, Haas' account was augmented by a description of Tiberias taken from *A Description of the East, and Some Other Countries* by Richard Pococke.<sup>842</sup> It also includes excerpts from reports composed by other Jewish travellers such as the Karaite Shmuel ben David and by Moses of Satanow, from whom the publisher had copied information regarding Hebron, Jerusalem, Nablus, Damascus, Egypt and the Jewish community of Tiberias.<sup>843</sup>

It is unknown whether all these additions were inserted by Dubno or by someone else. While Scholem doubted that they were made by Dubno,<sup>844</sup> Abraham Yaari claimed that Dubno had drafted all the editorial notes in order to transform a short treatise into a book that could be printed. By supplementing the work with information on places that Simha Haas had never visited, Dubno managed to publish a highly instructive composition not only on the geography

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geography as *Kuntres Aharon*. Dubno himself also mentions his work as *Kuntres Aharon*: "And in *Kuntres Aharon* I will write more about this" (*u-ve-Kuntres Aharon ekhtov od ba-zeh*). Hayim Eliezer Hausdorf, *Doresh Tsiyon* (Jerusalem: Isaac Gashzinni, 1887); Carmoly, "Solomon Dubno", 312; Julius Eisenstein, *Otsar masa'ot* (New York: 1926), 237-51; GSJ, vol. 15.2, 85, Genesis 10:6; *ibid.* 84, Genesis 10:4.

<sup>841</sup> Yaari, *Mase'ot Erets Yisra'el*, 383.

<sup>842</sup> Richard Pococke, *A Description of the East, and Some Other Countries* (London: W. Bowyer, 1743).

<sup>843</sup> Abraham Yaari, "Notes on G. Scholem's Article, "Two Letters from Palestine, 1760-1764"" (Heb.), *Tarbiz* 26 (1956), 109-112.

<sup>844</sup> Gershom Scholem, "Two Letters from Palestine, 1760-1764" (Heb.), *Tarbiz* 26.4 (1956, 429-440).

and history of Palestine, but also on Egypt, Rhodes and Italy. This undertaking was particularly valuable due to the scarcity of contemporary sources on the Middle East that were available to the Jewish public at that time.<sup>845</sup> In contrast, David Kamenetsky believes that Dubno could not be the publisher of *Ahavat Tsiyon*, because the book does not appear in his booklist of 1814. As a publisher, he would have retained at least one copy, as he did with *La-yesharim tehilah* by Moshe Hayyim Luzzatto and *Sha'are ne'imah* by Solomon Chelm. *Sipure erets ha-Galil* appears in his booklist of 1771, but the manuscript, copied in Dubno's hand (probably before he had left Eastern Europe in 1766) was given to the Lehren family collection before Dubno's death in 1813, which explains its absence from the auction list of 1814. Furthermore, according to Kamenetsky, it is unlikely that Dubno would have published *Ahavat Tsiyon* in Grodno, as he lived at that time in Amsterdam, the biggest Jewish book publishing centre of the day, and there is no evidence that he ever traveled to Eastern Europe after moving back to Amsterdam in 1783.<sup>846</sup> One might, however, disagree with the last argument, as Dubno published his *Tikun soferim* in Vienna in 1799/1800, although he lived in Amsterdam at that time.

Dubno himself referred to his own work on the geography of Palestine as *Kuntres Aharon*, and there was no reason for him to change the title just before publication. Taking into account the fact that he always gave credit to other scholars in his own publications, it does not seem likely that he would have committed the plagiarism of which Yaari accuses him. He owned few books composed by non-Jews and he never quoted Gentile authors in his own writings.

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<sup>845</sup> Yaari, "Notes on G. Scholem's Article", 109-112.

<sup>846</sup> Kamenetsky, "Haskamot", *Yeshurun* 8, 720-721, n. 9.



It is therefore doubtful that he read any books by Pococke. Moreover, not a single volume on Dubno's inventory was in English, a language which he most probably never mastered.

## Conclusion

Solomon Dubno composed a number of poems and one fictional story. However, his lyrical output is modest in comparison with the number of works that he devoted to Hebrew grammar. Some verses in his poems were repeated verbatim in more than one work, and a few of his works share a very similar structure. It seems that he did not have a taste for variance. He may have considered the writing of poetry as *bitul Torah* (the neglect of the Torah study), and, therefore, felt that he should devote his time to more relevant tasks. It is probably because of his perception of poetry as an unreligious pastime that Dubno tried to make his poems morally improving and it seems that he enjoyed the task of poetry writing as it offered the possibility of experimenting with the Hebrew language whose cultivation was of interest to him. While the perception of poetry as a *bitul Torah* and as an appealing literary device is contradictory, Dubno managed to mitigate the former through the didacticism of his work and thus reconcile between the opposing stances on the Hebrew poetry. In this way, his poetry subscribes to the practice of mediating between polar views in Jewish thought, which was characteristic of the early maskilim.<sup>847</sup>

The style and contents of Dubno's poetry are typical for the early Haskalah. He composed his works in biblical Hebrew and relied heavily on the

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<sup>847</sup> Schatz, "Peoples Pure of Speech", 181-187.

technique of *melitsah*. Many of his poems were written in the form of an acrostic and share some features with non-maskilic Ashkenazi poetry, such as rhythm and rhyme. That he often indicates in his introductions to the poems the number of verses or syllables contained in each line points to the fact that he considered these stylistic features of great importance. Regardless of the occasion for which the poems were composed, be it a wedding, a book introduction or an elegy, all of Dubno's poems have a highly didactic undertone. While his literary output might be lacking in artistic originality, it is noteworthy as the creation of a maskil who himself admitted that writing poetry was inferior to religious study. In order to compensate for this, he tried to charge his works with a moral message, and this didactic character of his poetry aligns him with the followers of the religious mainstream.

The image of Dubno's literary heritage has been distorted by numerous misattributions to him of various Hebrew works by others, as well as in consequence of the allegations of plagiarism levelled at him. However, the latter does not seem to be justified. In the case of *Ahavat Tsiyon*, there is no proof that Dubno was involved in any way in the publication of the work. The claim voiced in *Ha-Me'asef*, whereby Dubno had allegedly plagiarised Wessely's poem, also seems unfounded, as only the first line of *Birkat Yosef* bears some resemblance to *Mahalal Re'a*, while the rest of Dubno's work differs from it to a great extent. Due to the conflict that erupted between Dubno and the Prussian maskilim, it is possible that the accusation of plagiarism was part of a deliberate smear campaign, as the *Ha-Me'asef* reviewer clearly sought to tarnish Dubno's reputation and ridicule his Eastern European origins. Furthermore, Dubno's style of writing and his work on scribal emendations seemed antiquarian to the

followers of the Berlin Haskalah. However, although his poetry was criticised in *Ha-Me'asef*, some Jews seemed to appreciate Dubno's poems, as is evidenced by the epithalamium he was commissioned to compose for an enlightened couple on the occasion of their marriage. After Dubno's death, his poems were published in *Bikure to'elet* and copied by Samuel Mulder in his notebook, which suggests they fit in with the tastes of the Dutch Jews of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The fact that Dubno described himself as a grammarian and a poet indicates that he considered the writing of grammar and poetry important endeavours.<sup>848</sup> Poetry enabled Dubno to employ the Hebrew language as a creative tool and to demonstrate that biblical Hebrew was not only an object of scholarly research but also a living language which could be used for conveying a moral message to the younger generation of Jews. While he felt that poetry was inferior to Torah study, composing poems could still be a source of pride because of its capacity to deliver morally improving lessons to its readers.

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<sup>848</sup> See for example: Solomon Dubno, *Reshimah mi-sefarim sheli* (Amsterdam: 1771), Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana, HS. ROS. 469, first page; idem, *Shir le-Simḥat Torah*, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana, HS. ROS. 337.

## Conclusions

The objective of the present study was to determine the scope of Solomon Dubno's role in forming the early Haskalah in general, and in determining the final shape of *Sefer netivot ha-shalom* in particular. The assessment of Dubno's role in shaping the Jewish Enlightenment is based on the analysis of his literary output and publishing activity, as well as on his reading interests and his scholarship in the fields of Hebrew grammar and Bible commentary. While Dubno's work has been studied by a number of Jewish historians,<sup>849</sup> this dissertation constitutes the first exhaustive study of his literary and scholarly activity.

According to Yaakov Shavit, the Hebrew language renewal associated with the Haskalah movement was more an aspiration than a fact. Although the number of published Hebrew works increased, the number of readers remained unchanged, and there was no significant improvement in the command of Hebrew among Ashkenazi Jews.<sup>850</sup> In the German states, *Sefer netivot ha-shalom* turned out to be a huge success. Its readers, German-speaking Jews, were undergoing a process of assimilation into non-Jewish society, and to a great extent abandoning Hebrew in favour of German. At the same time, the publication turned out to have a limited impact on Eastern-European Jewry.<sup>851</sup> Dubno's own

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<sup>849</sup> See for example: Kamenetsky, "Haskamot (...)", *Yeshurun* 8, 718-759; *Yeshurun* 9, 711-755; *Yeshurun* 10, 751-775; Weinberg, "Language Questions", 197-242; Schatz, "Zur Pentateuch-Ausgabe," lxi-lxxx; Breuer, *The Limits of Enlightenment*, passim, Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn*, passim.

<sup>850</sup> Shavit, "A Duty Too Heavy", 113.

<sup>851</sup> Zuzanna Krzemien, "Solomon Dubno, his Eastern European Scholarship, and the German Haskalah" in: Tobias Grill (ed.), *Jews and Germans in Eastern Europe. Shared and Comparative Histories, New Perspectives on Modern Jewish History*, vol. 8 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2018).

Pentateuch edition, which was meant to include a commentary focused on Hebrew grammar, and to appear without any translation into a modern European language, was never published, but the number of rabbinical approbations he managed to amass is a measure of the deep interest in the study of Hebrew texts and grammar that the project had aroused among the educated rabbinical Jewish elite of both Eastern and Western Europe.

Dubno's involvement in the publication of *Sefer netivot ha-shalom* raised his profile among Jewish scholars who heaped praise on both his biblical commentary on the Book of Genesis and on *Tikun soferim*, a grammatical treatise on scribal emendations to the biblical text. However, he found himself at loggerheads with Mendelssohn because of their differing visions of the shape and purpose of the Biur. As a result, only a small excerpt of his introduction to the work, replaced by Mendelssohn's *Or la-netivah*, was ever published. The same fate met his *Tikun soferim*, of which only short fragments were included by Mendelssohn in *Sefer netivot ha-shalom*, but which Dubno printed independently in its entirety several years later. While some scholars have questioned the authorship of *Alim li-terufah*, attributing it to Mendelssohn,<sup>852</sup> a careful examination of the work reveals that it was certainly Dubno who composed the prospectus, although one cannot rule out the possibility that Mendelssohn might have advised on its construction and substance.<sup>853</sup> Some of the circumstances surrounding the publication of the Biur remain obscured by the personal conflict between Dubno and Mendelssohn. In consequence, it was difficult even for those who were not directly involved to remain objective when reporting on the reaction

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<sup>852</sup> Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn*, 376; GSJ, vol. 14, viii.

<sup>853</sup> Breuer, *The Limits of Enlightenment*, 234-235, n. 26.

of the Jewish public to the German Pentateuch translation. The enterprise constituted a controversial novelty at the time, which some viewed as educationally beneficial to the younger generation, while others considered scandalous, fearing that it would lead to assimilation into the Gentile society.

Of particular importance for the present study were Dubno's personal notes and the private correspondence between him, Mendelssohn, and some of their acquaintances, such as Yosef Pesseles and David Friedländer, who discussed in their letters matters relating to the publication of the German Pentateuch translation. These documents reveal the extent of Dubno's commitment to this publication, starting from his willingness to work on it for a number of years without being paid, and ending with his review of Mendelssohn's commentary on the Book of Exodus, where he amended some minor mistakes and suggested further improvements. Furthermore, these private documents trace Dubno's shift of approach towards German Pentateuch translation, and his turn towards the traditional, Aramaic *targum*, coupled with rigorous study of Hebrew grammar.

While Dubno's auction catalogue has to be regarded as a combination of both literary tastes of his customers, Amsterdam port Jews, and his own, the catalogue composed by Dubno in 1771 can undoubtedly be interpreted as an insight into his personal interests, which, apparently, were similar to the interests of Dutch Jews of that time. His collection included not only works that would appeal to the rabbinical elite of the eighteenth century, but also books from the fields of history and poetry, and works authored by fellow maskilim, the reading of which would be considered *bitul Torah* by conservative rabbis. The diversity of

his interests, as demonstrated by his booklist, ranged from biblical commentary through grammar to history.

Dubno's life-long goal was to popularise an accurate interpretation of the Pentateuch through study of the original Hebrew text. He strove to achieve this by means of his commentaries, grammatical works and essays on Scripture. Moreover, through his scholarly and publishing activity he endeavoured to expand the boundaries of literary Hebrew and to promote it as a language that can be used in both belles-lettres and scholarly publications. The content of Dubno's poetry reveals a strong connection with the literary circles of Sephardic Amsterdam, and seem to be distant from the maskilic Prussian poetry, which, in contrast to his works, tended to be more ideological. Dubno created a number of poems for his own pleasure or on demand for private clients. His works are written in biblical Hebrew and employ the technique of *melitsah*. In order to compensate for the distraction from Torah study that reading or writing poetry would entail, he would make his verses highly didactic, aiming at the moral betterment of his readers. He experimented with various poetical genres, including a wedding poem, an elegy, and a Purim riddle. The present study has also identified several works that have been wrongly attributed to Dubno, such as *Klale isur ve-heter bi-shehitah*, a composition on ritual slaughter, and *Hibur al ha-tekhunah, ha-filosofyah ve-ha-mistorin*, a treatise on astronomy, philosophy and mysticism, thus creating a wrong impression of the scope of his scholarly activity.

A number of scholars believed that it was Dubno's incompetence that drove him to abandon his work on the biblical commentary that was to accompany Mendelssohn's German translation, considering him incapable of writing such a work as *Alim li-terufah*, which heralded a new stage in the development of the

German Haskalah. Dubno's allegedly forged letter to Heidenheim, dating from 1789, in which he went out of his way to praise Mendelssohn's Pentateuch translation, has contributed to the general view of Dubno's outlook and his motivation for withdrawing from Mendelssohn's publishing enterprise. His literary reputation has been further damaged by the largely unfounded accusation of plagiarism in connection with the book *Ahavat Tsiyon*, whose attribution to Dubno is unproven.

It is impossible to fully assess Dubno's role in shaping the Haskalah movement so long as some of his works remain inaccessible to us. Only a fragment has survived of his introduction to *Sefer netivot ha-shalom*. Other works by Dubno, such as *Kuntres aharon* and *Avodat matanah*, to which he referred in his own writings, have never been found. Nevertheless, the findings of the present study are enough to counter the conventional view whereby Dubno's share in the authorship of *Sefer netivot ha-shalom* was negligible. If not for him, Mendelssohn's German Pentateuch is unlikely to have included so much content related to Hebrew grammar. Moreover, if we compare *Or la-netivah* by Mendelssohn with Dubno's unpublished introduction and his *Alim li-terufah*, it becomes clear that the former's work incorporated long quotations from the latter's writings. However, there is a notable difference between their respective outlooks, e. g. on the appropriate attitude towards Gentile society and culture, with *Alim li-terufah* expressing a particularist view, and *Or la-netivah* a more universalist conception of the position of Jews in relation to the rest of humanity. Furthermore, Dubno's extant remarks regarding Mendelssohn's commentary on the Book of Exodus suggest that the latter did not feel competent to compose the commentary entirely by himself, and required feedback from a scholar such as



Dubno, who had the benefit of an in-depth religious education. It is for this reason that the present study challenges the conclusions of David Sorkin, Alexander Altmann, and Haim Borodiansky, who downplay Dubno's role in the publication of the *Biur* and present his work as of little importance to the final outcome of the project, while attributing to Mendelssohn all the scholarly insights that appear in *Alim li-terufah* and *Or la-netivah*.<sup>854</sup> My own findings are consistent with previous research carried out by David Kamenetsky and Werner Weinberg, who drew attention to the traditionalist worldview expressed in Dubno's *Biur prospectus*, and to the close relationship between his own work and Mendelssohn's.<sup>855</sup> However, it should be stressed that this does not imply that Dubno was the only or the most important contributor to *Sefer netivot ha-shalom*. It rather emphasises that the final outcome of the project would have been very different if it were not for Dubno's insistence on devoting a large part of the publication to Hebrew grammar. Taking into account Mendelssohn's disdain for works on grammar,<sup>856</sup> it is probable that without Dubno's participation in the project, *Sefer netivot ha-shalom* would have consisted only of the German Pentateuch translation with commentary, without scribal emendations or any attempt to educate the public about the grammatical rules of the Hebrew language.

An objective assessment of Dubno's role in the publication process of the *Biur* has been rendered more difficult by the veneration and esteem showered on Mendelssohn by scholars throughout the centuries. While according to some

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<sup>854</sup> Sorkin, *Moses Mendelssohn*, 54-55; Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn*, 369; GSJ, vol. 14, viii.

<sup>855</sup> Kamenetsky, "Haskamot (...)", *Yeshurun* 8, 733-734, n. 41; Weinberg, "Language Questions", 239.

<sup>856</sup> Mendelssohn, *Or la-netivah*, GSJ, vol. 14, 248.

Mendelssohn had a key role in initiation of Jewish Enlightenment and acculturation of German Jews,<sup>857</sup> already in the late nineteenth century others were beginning to question the scope of his influence, shifting their attention to the social and literary activities of other maskilim, whose programme not always corresponded to Mendelssohn's worldview.<sup>858</sup> Although many scholars assert that Mendelssohn's ties with traditional Judaism are unquestionable,<sup>859</sup> the authenticity of his religious devotion has been put in doubt, for example by Allan Arkush.<sup>860</sup> While his first biographies were clearly coloured by their authors' personal relations with Mendelssohn,<sup>861</sup> the 19<sup>th</sup>- and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century *Wissenschaft des Judentums* scholars were free of this kind of influence. Nevertheless, they reproduced some old maskilic attitudes, such as the glorification of Sephardic Jewry and the assessment of Polish Jewry as

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<sup>857</sup> See for example: Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn*; David Patterson, "Moses Mendelssohn's Concept of Tolerance" in: Alexander Altmann (ed.), *Between East and West: Essays Dedicated to the Memory of Bela Horowitz* (London: East and West Library, 1958), 149-163; Michael L. Morgan, "Mendelssohn" in: Daniel H. Frank, Oliver Leaman (eds), *History of Jewish Philosophy* (London; New York: Routledge, 1997), vol. 2, 660-681; Kayserling, *Moses Mendelssohn*, 284, 484; Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, vol. 11, 1-3; Simon Dubnov, *History of the Jews* (South Brunswick; London: Thomas Yoseloff, 1971), vol. 4, 336.

Franz Rosenzweig, "Pronouncement for a Celebration of Mendelssohn" in: Barbara Ellen Galli (ed.), *Cultural Writings of Franz Rosenzweig* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 103.

<sup>858</sup> Shmuel Feiner, "Mendelssohn and Mendelssohn's Disciples. A Re-examination", *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 40.1 (1995), 133-167.

<sup>859</sup> Dauber, *Antonio's Devils*, 105-107; Sorkin, *Moses Mendelssohn*, xx-xxi; Alexander Altmann, "Moses Mendelssohn as the Archetypal German Jew" in: Jehuda Reinharz, Walter Schatzberg (eds), *The Jewish Response to German Culture: from the Enlightenment to the Second World War* (Hanover N.H., London: Clark University; University Press of New England, 1985), 17-31;

<sup>860</sup> Allan Arkush, "The Questionable Judaism of Moses Mendelssohn", *New German Critique* 77 (1999), 29-44; idem, *Moses Mendelssohn and the Enlightenment* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994).

<sup>861</sup> Pelli, "Moshe Mendelson ki-demut ha-yehudi he-ḥadash", 45-48; Moshe Pelli, "Biography as a Genre in Hebrew Haskalah: Isaac Abravanel as a 'Maskil' Bridging between Two Cultures", *Jerusalem Studies in Hebrew Literature* 16 (1997), 75-88.

traditionalist and backward.<sup>862</sup> Consequently, the role of Eastern-European Jews in the Haskalah was downplayed by both contemporary maskilim and subsequent historians.

Some scholars question whether Dubno ever belonged to the Haskalah movement. David Kamenetsky notes that he is not referred to as a maskil by fellow Jews;<sup>863</sup> rather he is called grammarian or poet.<sup>864</sup> Although he was involved in Mendelssohn's Pentateuch translation -- one of the most prominent projects of the German Haskalah, and he also published several Hebrew poems as well as works on Hebrew grammar, his views were very distant from the ones espoused for example by David Friedländer or Markus Herz. It should be kept in mind that the circle of early Jewish Enlightenment followers was very diverse, and it is impossible to define the 'typical' early maskil.<sup>865</sup> Every individual who engaged with the movement in its early stages exhibited different literary interests, religious involvement and attitude towards Hebrew and modern languages. While Dubno's withdrawal from Mendelssohn's German Pentateuch project has been interpreted as his rejection of the Jewish Enlightenment,<sup>866</sup> the findings of the present study suggest that he never abandoned the Haskalah movement, but rather represented a different stream within the maskilic thought than was embraced by Mendelssohn. The fact that *Yuval ve-Na'aman*, his greatest literary work and a declaration of his support for the renewal of the Hebrew poetry, was composed in 1790, that is, about eight years after he had

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<sup>862</sup> Schapkow, "Konstruktionen jüdischer Geschichte", 63-86.

<sup>863</sup> Kamenetsky, "Haskamot," *Yeshurun* 8, 721-722, n. 11; Sandler, *Be'ur la-Torah*, 19.

<sup>864</sup> Kamenetsky, "Haskamot," *Yeshurun* 8, 718-722; idem, *Yeshurun* 9, 746; See also: Mulder, *Iets over de Begraafplaatsen*, 15.

<sup>865</sup> I would like to thank Prof. Shmuel Feiner for this comment.

<sup>866</sup> Assaf, *Untold Tales of the Hasidim*, 24-25.

severed his ties with Mendelssohn, can serve as a proof that Dubno's rejection of the Berlin Jewish salons was not synonymous with abandoning the ideas of Jewish Enlightenment in general. Furthermore, Dubno's *haskamah* for Wolf Heidenheim, in which he praised his *Maḥzor*, suggests that his stance on translating Hebrew texts into modern languages might have mellowed with time.<sup>867</sup> Dubno's views on the methods, which should be employed by the Jewish Enlighteners in order to spread and improve the Jewish public's knowledge of Hebrew, evolved over time and can serve as an illustration of a dynamic, non-one-dimensional nature of the early Haskalah, in which different visions clashed and were subsequently rejected or modified.

Dubno was certainly an intellectual who was not only engaged in the absorption of ideas but also in the creation and dissemination of "high culture" products, such as poetry and grammatical treatises. His ambition was to compose a rational grammatical commentary to the Pentateuch, based on the literal meaning of the Hebrew text, and enriched by the provision of historical and geographical contexts.<sup>868</sup> Taking into account Dubno's alienation from non-Jewish society, it is unlikely that he considered the Hebrew Bible as a common denominator with Christianity or as an expression of universalistic and humanist values. However, one should not equate all the ideas of the European Enlightenment with the goals of the Haskalah, even if the former had inspired and influenced the latter to a great extent. In fact, such Enlightenment values as social justice or humanism were not commonly present on the agenda of Eastern-European maskilim.<sup>869</sup> Like many other followers of the early Haskalah, Dubno

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<sup>867</sup> Heidenheim, *Sefer kerovot*, 5b-6b.

<sup>868</sup> Etkes, "Li-she'elat mevasre ha-haskalah", 97-98.

<sup>869</sup> Zalkin, "Meḥkar ha-haskalah be-mizraḥ Eropah", 172.

exhibited little social engagement, except for his teaching activity, which constituted one of his main sources of income. His rapprochement with the Jewish followers of the European Enlightenment stemmed from a joint interest in Hebrew language renewal through the study of grammar and the writing of poetry, rather than as a rebellion against the worldview of the traditional, rabbinical elite.

While opinions on Dubno often contradict each other, it is certain that he was one of the most eminent Eastern-European scholars of his period, and his role in shaping the early Haskalah deserves recognition. Dubno contributed to the Hebrew literature in three main areas: religious commentaries, grammatical treatises, and poetry. This choice of genres, which were unpopular and not accessible to the Jewish population, especially women, reflects his desire to target a narrow circle of highly-educated experts rather than as many readers as possible. Although his encounter with Mendelssohn had raised his interest in biblical exegesis, Dubno cannot be called one of Mendelssohn's disciples,<sup>870</sup> since he maintained a different stance on what an observant follower of Jewish Enlightenment should study, and from what kind of knowledge he should abstain. There is no doubt that Dubno, in addition to rabbinical tradition, made a selective use of maskilic ideas, which he applied to his own scholarly pursuits, thus preserving a certain degree of intellectual independence from both highly conservative rabbis and radical maskilim. Dubno's grammatical works, *Tikun soferim* and the commentary on the Book of Genesis, were both vital to the uniqueness and academic excellence of the Pentateuch. While these works were not a creative novelty, they constituted a comprehensive synopsis of the Jewish

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<sup>870</sup> Feiner, "Mendelssohn and *Mendelssohn's Disciples*", 133-167.

scholarship devoted to the Masorah. In contrast to Mendelssohn, who perceived the Pentateuch as a historical text, Dubno regarded grammar as key to understanding the meaning of the Scripture. It seems that it was the difference in perception of the significance of the Masorah and its role in the *Sefer netivot ha-shalom* that constituted the main reason for the conflict between Mendelssohn and Dubno, and not the financial issues or the presence of the German translation in the publication, as in later years he endorsed the German translation of *Maḥzor* in his *haskamah* for Wolf Heidenheim.

Dubno's mindset seems to have been rooted almost exclusively in his Jewish cultural heritage and developed independently of the European Enlightenment. His life and engagement in the Jewish Enlightenment can be regarded as an example of a link between Eastern and Western Europe. His interest in Hebrew grammar, Bible exegesis, and poetry went against the typical *yeshivah* curriculum, and it seems that he acquired his knowledge in these fields through self-study. For this reason, he cannot be regarded as an average Eastern-European Jew, but as a unique, outstanding scholar. Dubno's conflict with Mendelssohn and other Berlin maskilim can serve as an insight into the multitude of views in the Jewish Enlightenment, which encompassed a continuum of different approaches towards Hebrew language and literature, and which varied between individuals and bore a different character depending on the time and location. The Jewish Enlightenment in general, and the Berlin Haskalah in particular, was not a uniform movement and its shape was not determined exclusively by Prussian Jews, but by intellectuals from different parts of Europe. Dubno's scholarly expertise was crucial for the realisation of the Biur project, and

his work should be given more credit in an assessment of the content of *Sefer netivot ha-shalom*.

Even though I deliberately restricted the scope of my research to the life and work of Solomon Dubno, it should be stressed that there were many other Eastern-European Jews who played an important role in shaping the early Haskalah and whose work was not addressed in this study. Further research is needed in order to demonstrate and assess the participation of other Polish Jews in creation of literature and scholarship of the early Jewish Enlightenment. Very little is known about the life of individuals such as Aaron Jaroslav, author of the *Biur* commentary on the Book of Numbers, Shalom of Mezerich, who completed Dubno's *Tikun soferim* when the latter terminated his involvement in the publication of *Sefer netivot ha-shalom*,<sup>871</sup> or Yehudah Hurwitz (1734 - 1797), a physician born in Vilna, who was literary active in the Netherlands.<sup>872</sup> The work of a number of other German religious maskilim requires scholarly attention, for example, Wolf Heidenheim, whose edited *Maḥzor* still awaits in-depth research,<sup>873</sup> and so does the scholarly output of Mordechai Gumpel Schnaber

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<sup>871</sup> GSJ, vol. 14, 247.

<sup>872</sup> Shmuel Feiner, "Between the 'Clouds of Foolishness' and the 'Light of Reason': Judah Hurwitz, an Early, Eighteenth-Century, Maskil" in: Immanuel Etkes, David Assaf et al. (eds), *Within Hasidic Circles. Studies in Hasidism in Memory of Mordecai Wilensky* (Jerusalem: Bialik, 1999), 111-160; Harry A. Savitz, "Aphorisms of Judah Hurwitz, MD; Erudite Physician, Ethical Philosopher, and Author", *New York State Journal of Medicine* 75.6 (1975), 931-934.

<sup>873</sup> Lewin, "Zum hundertsten Todestage Wolf Heidenheims", 1-16; Louis Lewin, "Materialien zu einer Biographie Wolf Heidenheims", *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums* 44 (1900), 134-138; Solomon Feffer, "The Literary Contributions of Wolf Heidenheim (1757-1832)", *Jewish Book Annual* 14 (1956/57), 70-73.

Levisohn (1741-1797), a physician and one of the first Jews to receive the title of Professor.<sup>874</sup>

The role of Eastern-European Jewish intellectuals in shaping the early Haskalah still awaits the comprehensive analysis and re-evaluation that it deserves. The present study is a contribution to this highly complex field, and a call for much needed further research.

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<sup>874</sup> Moshe Pelli, "Mordechai Gumpel Schnaber: The First Religious Reform Theoretician of the Hebrew Haskalah in Germany", *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 64.4 (1974), 289-313; Hans Joachim Schoeps, "Gumpertz Levison - Leben und Werk eines gelehrten Abenteurers des 18. Jahrhunderts", *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 4 (1952), 150-161; David. B. Ruderman, *Jewish Thought and Scientific Discovery in Early Modern Europe* (Detroit : Wayne State University Press, 2001), 332-368.



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Appendix no. 1 to Chapter 1. Portrait of Solomon Dubno



שאו עיניכם נגידים • בני אדם גם בני איש • רחוקי עם איש הרובי •  
 לכו נא לחמו בלחמי • ועת תצאו הלא אש • קכם ייני עם חלבי •  
 מתי השגל ויאנשי • תבונה הנאתכם • פנו נמ התכו ננובי •  
 הלא מלי טל תחה • וגשמי גשם נדבנה • וזוף ארץ רביבי •  
 כמו פי אקרא אלי חו • צבים בהר ישקופו • ויראו נוי מ-חצבי •  
 נדיבים הרבו ראוי • ייני פי נחמה הוא • וגם חומורתי סביבי •  
 יחיה לל וכן הוא • לדורתי תברני • והשמיט רגזי ועצבי •  
 ונדע הוא במצודה • מצודה דוד וציון • פכוחו ערה קרבי •  
 אבקש בעדו לאלי • גדול העצה ורבה • עלילה צוד מ-שגבי •  
 לזכרו ל-שמות • בשמחת גלי לדגן • בער יחשה כ-אמי •  
 מליצתי אהריבם • למול קוראם פרי • אלי כל רואה קרבי •  
 דבר

דבר פי מתק לחכו • כמו נופת צוף דבשי • דצה הגיוני וניבי •  
 ובעל מקרא ומשנה • וגם תלמודי הלא • תחמם נגד שביבי •  
 בקולי אקרא לכל רב • ותלמיד תועה בשרה • הלא ידרוך בנתיבי •  
 נתיבי שר לא ידעו • אנוש מאז מלפנים • עדי בא איש כדבבי •

וְרֵעֵךְ אֲשֶׁר כָּנַסְתָּ שָׂךְ	שְׁמַע בְּנֵי עֲצַת אֱהוּבֶךָ
אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל זְמַן יִטִּי בְךָ	לְמוֹד עֲבוֹד לְאֵל בְּרֵךְ אֶתְךָ
אֲנֹשׁ אֲשֶׁר לָרַע יִסִּי תֶךָ	מִנְעֵ גְחִיב אֲוִיל וְקִרְבַת
רָךְ וְתֵקֶץ קִצִּי רָךְ	הֵלֵא בְּסוּף הֶקֶץ בְּלֵה שְׂכֵךְ
לֵב בְּךָ לְאֵל יִצֵּךְ רָךְ	בְּשֵׁכְךָ בְךָ וְקוֹי מֶךָ שְׁפוֹךְ
לְכָל אֲנֹשׁ פְּנֵי רִצּוֹ נָךְ	נְטוֹשׁ חֲרוֹן נָךְ וְהֵרָאָה
בְּדָם בְּמַחֲלָצוֹת לְבוֹ שְׂךָ	יִקָּר הִנֵּה לְאֵב וְאֵם וְכֵךְ
תֶּךָ וְגַם בְּמִי אֶכְּ לֶךָ	וְגַם מִלֵּם כֶּפֶס עֵלֶם בְּמִשְׁ
וְאֶתְךָ הִנֵּה לְאֵל בְּיוֹ נָךְ	אֲכֹל וְגַם שְׁתַּה בְּשֵׁךְ מְחַה
שְׁמַע בְּנֵי עֲצַת אֱהוּבֶךָ	לְכָל אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מִצֵּךְ וְךָ



## שיר נאה על מדת החנופה

אשר בעדמתה מתפארת, לצודר נפשות התמימים ממהרה, כי תלבש  
 אדרת, הצניעות והחסידות למען כחש, אולם בסתר תשך  
 בנחש, וכמו פתן חרש אשר לא ישמע לקול מלחש.

אני מדת החנופה מאד נאווה ויפה וכל סלמי מנופה ועלי לתרופה :  
 עלי שפה ברוכה ויפה והודיה שרובה גם שבחה ואמרוהי צדופה :  
 עלי לשון וגם פה כמו שמים וישפה וכל ייבי אופה כמו סלח מנופה :  
 עלי מלים ערוכים להטות לב מלבים ואשה לב נסיכים עלי ש רק בשפה :  
 קלבי חיה ומדמה ותכמתה בערמה ואביט ל ארמה וקומתי בפופה :  
 עדי ארץ פראשי הלא אקור בלחשי ואחרתם בכחשי ואנכה בחנופה :  
 ואנגוב כל לבבות במלי הערבות עלי גשם גרבות להטטים בסופה :  
 ותמאון לקולי הלא לשכון בצלי אבל תרח מעלי הלא תימי שלופה :  
 וגם עם כל לאמי אדגד את שלומי בלבן ה ארשי ארון בלהה וולפה :  
 ועת אשר פדיתי לרצת ערתי אכפר ב שפתי כמו עגלה ערופה :  
 ואדמה ל לשדים אלי בעל נעתם ואונה עם אחרים כמו שפחה חרופה :  
 ואחרתה אנושה כמו שפחה ופועה ותהנהי קדושה למשח פס לחרפה :  
 לשון אחי ועמי אבסה את אשמי ואצטרק בנעמי אבל ארשע בערפה :  
 שמי שיני בכוסי ושוא שפתי למחסי וכל על בדיסי עלי איפה ואיפה :  
 ועמרי החלים להזיל ב החלים ומעות של אגלים בעל עיד ה שחרפה :  
 בפי אבל אנתם וכל יחוס ארחם ותרחקם ותרחס וחעי ה חלופה :  
 ארחם היל בשוחי ועת יבוא לבחי הלא עמוד בפחתי והיום רד ורפה :  
 בפי אגודר גודים אבל המה שפחים ועת אחי גודים רבוי א חלופה :  
 ותדקתי ותנומה ותלוני סתומה ותחלמי קטומה וכיחתי גרופה :  
 ועם קומה וקופה הלא אהיא בשפה אני מדת חנופה מאד נאווה ויפה :  
 אנכי המעוד, לבבות לעוד, בלי ללכת באחרתיה, ולהתרחק מנתיבותיה,  
 שלמה במהורר וואל זל מרובנא רבתי יע"א

Appendix no. 5 to Chapter 4. Poem Shir na'eh al midat ha-ḥanupah  
[fragments]

[...] אָנִי מִדַּח הַחֲנוּפָה מְאֹד נִאֲמָה וַיְפֹה וְכָל סִלְמֵי מְנוּפָה וְעָלִי לְחֲנוּפָה :  
[...] אֵלֵי שׁוֹפָה בְרוּחָה וַיְפֹה וְהִדְחָה שְׂרוּכָה גַם שְׂבֹחָה וְאִמְרָתִי צְרוּפָה :  
[...] תָּגִם עִם כָּל לְאֻמֵי אֲדוּמֵי אֶת שְׁלֹמֵי קִלְכָן הִי אֲרֻשִׁי אֲדוּן בְּלִהָה וְיִלְפָה :  
נִעַת אִפְרָיִם קִדְוֵי לְרִצְתָה עֲדוּי אֲכַפֵּר בְּשִׁשְׁתֵּי קָמוּ עֲנָלָה שְׂרוּפָה :  
וְדַקְדָּקֵי וְחֲנוּמָה וְחֲלוּנֵי סְחֻמָה וְנִחְלָמֵי קְמֻמָה וְכִיֵּיחֵי נְרוּפָה :  
וְעַם קִמָּה וְקִפָּה הֲלֹא אֶקְרָא בְשֵׁפָה אָנִי מִדַּח הַחֲנוּפָה מְאֹד נִאֲמָה וַיְפֹה :  
אֲנִי הַמְשֻׁדָּד, לַבְבוֹת לְעוֹדֵד, בְּלִי לִלְנֵת בְּאַחֲזוּחֵיהִי, וְלִהְתַּדְחֵק מְנַתִּיבוֹתֶיהִי,  
שְׁלֵמָה בְּמַהוֹרֵר יוֹאֵל זֵל מְרוֹבְנָא רַבְתִּי יַעֲזֵר