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The Haskalah in Vilna: R. Yeḥezkel Feivel's *Toldot Adam*

One of the issues that continues to engage scholars of the Haskalah is that of its sources and origins. As with the broader historiographical quest to define the basic determinants of Jewish modernity, an inquiry into historical beginnings has the inevitable effect of challenging our presuppositions about the factors that gave rise to this movement. Clearly, the very effort to explain what is new and distinct necessitates some reflection on what is meant by Haskalah and how it differs from the particular character of early modern European Jewry in the century leading up to it. Such questions are difficult to answer because these historical evaluations are predicated upon the relative weight assigned to a broad array of related factors—sociological, cultural, religious, and political—that informed the far-reaching changes sweeping through the Jewish communities of Europe. An inclination towards socio-economic or political determinants, for example, may point to a set of historical causes that are significantly different than those emerging from a study of cultural or intellectual factors.

In the case of the Eastern European Haskalah, the subject of our inquiry here, the task of exploring its origins is both simplified and complicated by a variety of particular circumstances. Broadly speaking, the German and Eastern European Haskalahs were both spurred on by the growing strain between pre-existent patterns of European Jewish life and a variety of new external realities, but these patterns and realities were markedly dissimilar. In contrast to the Jews of Prus-

sia and Austro-Hungary, Jewish life in the Polish-Lithuanian and Russian Empires remained thoroughly insular until the third decade of the nineteenth century. Despite the fact that these lands were directly affected by a series of major political-military events, namely the Partition of Poland (1794) and the Napoleonic Wars (1812), the communal and cultural patterns of the Eastern European kehillot were not substantially affected by them. When the historical realities of Eastern Europe eventually began to shift, the time-lag vis-a-vis changes in the West became a significant factor, for the rise of Haskalah in the East owed more to the cultural and intellectual movements sweeping in from the German-speaking lands than it did to the indigenous culture of the Eastern *kehillot*.

In a recent series of articles, Immanuel Etkes sought to address the question of the early development of the Eastern European Haskalah by focusing on the transitional phase that bridged "traditional patterns and the Haskalah movement in its full maturity."[1] He pointed to a small group of late eighteenth-century Polish-Lithuanian rabbinic figures and the ways in which they served as "forerunners" of the Eastern European Haskalah, effectively (though not deliberately) preparing the soil for what would later sprout as a rich maskilic culture. In an earlier study of the beginnings of the Haskalah in German lands, Azriel Shochat had examined both sociological and intellectual shifts of the early and mid-eighteenth century and argued that the Berlin Haskalah of the 1770's and 1780's, and the work of figures such as Moses Mendelssohn or Naftali Hirz Wessely, actually represented the climax of pre-existing trends, and not, as was often supposed, the beginnings of a new era.[2] Etkes, here less sociologically focused, suggests in far more nuanced terms that the Haskalah in Eastern Europe was not simply the natural culmination of earlier transformations, but was significantly shaped and nurtured by two different phenomena. There were, to be sure, a number of individuals who maintained positions of respect and authority in traditional East European circles and who actively engaged the philosophical-scientific heritage of medieval Judaism. In varying degrees, such individuals co-joined this medieval heritage with an interest in the contemporary European Enlightenment. But the impact of the German Haskalah created an entirely new set of cultural realities. Although some of Eastern European transition figures were cognizant of developments in Berlin and drew upon ideas formulated there, the Eastern European Haskalah emerged as a distinct phenomenon in the 1820's when it enthusiastically embraced the substance and inspirational model of the maskilic culture of German lands.[3]

This article revisits the question of the existence of pre-maskilic or

transitional figures in Eastern Europe by examining the writings of one such individual, R. Yeḥezkel Feivel b. Ze'ev Wolf, and his hagiographical book *Toldot Adam* (Dyhernfurth, 1801; Part II, 1809). A careful reading of this text and its use of traditional and maskilic material sheds much light on some important patterns of Eastern European culture, the influence of the Berlin Haskalah, and the substantive ways in which these two were woven together.[4] This book, with its manifold connections to Vilna of the late eighteenth-century, also allows us to address the question of social context: were such individual "forerunners" of the Eastern European Haskalah, as Etkes terms them, only isolated and exceptional individuals, or may one see them as part of a somewhat broader phenomenon that pointed towards an incipient socio-cultural shift within some wider Jewish circles?

I

Yeḥezkel Feivel was born in 1756 in the Lithuanian coastal town of Palanga, where, as an apparently precocious child with a talent for preaching, he became the town *maggid* while still in his youth.[5] At some point he held the same position in the southern Lithuanian town of Deretschin, where he served for over two decades and earned the popular designation as the "*maggid* of Deretschin." In 1811 he moved again, this time serving in the highly visible and prestigious position of *maggid* of Vilna until his death in 1833. Although R. Yeḥezkel Feivel lived much of his life in Lithuania, he also spent some time in the mid-1770's travelling through and preaching to communities such as Lemberg and Brody, apparently sojourning in Breslau for some time as well.[6] Aside from *Toldot Adam*, he is known to have authored two scholarly works of respectable though unremarkable quality: a commentary to Maimonides' *Hilkhot De-ot* and *Hilkhot Teshuvah*,[7] and a posthumously published commentary to *Midrash Rabbah*.[8] With his wife Elka, he fathered six children, most if not all of whom were born and raised in Deretschin.

His marriage, which took place at some point before 1788-89,[9] was to prove to be important to R. Yeḥezkel Feivel's career, for it gave him an elevated entree into the Vilna *kehillah*. Elka's father, R. Elhanan b. Isaac, was one of the distinguished *dayyanim* of Vilna, himself the son and son-in-law of scholars of note.[10] The late 1780s was a difficult and tense time in the Jewish community of Vilna for much of the *kehillah* was drawn into the protracted battle over the attempted ouster of Chief Rabbi Samuel b. Avigdor from his position. R. Elhanan's personal involvement in this affair is not known, but his

family did not remain aloof: his other son-in-law, Simon b. Wolf, was imprisoned by the authorities on account of his defense of the chief rabbi. In reaction to his incarceration, Simon involved himself further in the dispute by addressing a Polish-language treatise to the Sejm that called, in terms reminiscent of the position articulated earlier by Moses Mendelssohn, for a curtailment of the power of the kehillah and its institutions.[11]

In a world where kinship and scholarship were conspicuously linked and always relevant, R. Yeḥezkel Feivel's marriage was significant in that it also joined him to one of the most distinguished families of late eighteenth century Vilna, namely the children and grandchildren of Eliyahu b. Ẓevi Peseles. The wealthy and respected Eliyahu Peseles (d. 1771) was a first cousin to Solomon Zalman, whose son, the illustrious Gaon R. Eliyahu (d. 1797), Peseles helped support.[12] It is clear from the marriages and activities of this family that they represented a philanthropic and learned presence in Vilna that was unmatched. Peseles' eldest son, Baer (d. 1779), married Devorah, the daughter of the scholar R. Aryeh Leib Bloch, and it was Devorah's niece, Elka, who would become the wife of R. Yeḥezkel Feivel. Peseles' other son, Joseph (1751-1811), maintained the family's wealth and its communal-philanthropic stature, and he also happened to be a son-in-law of R. Samuel, the embattled but still powerful Chief Rabbi. One of Eliyahu Peseles' daughters, Mindel, was married to R. Noah b. Abraham Lifshütz (known as Noah Mendes; d. 1798), also a man of scholarly repute and the author of a few learned tracts. A daughter born to this couple married her third cousin, R. Abraham b. Eliyahu, the son of the Vilna Gaon, thus again linking the Peseles family to that of the great sage. Finally, another member of the Peseles family, Yeḥiel Mikhel,[13] married off his daughters to two of the Vilna Gaon's closest disciples, R. Sa'adyah b. Natan and R. Shlomoh Zalman b. Isaac (1756-1788), the brother of the illustrious R. Ḥayyim of Volozhin.[14]

The financial, communal, and scholarly prominence of this family is not incidental to our story, for, as we shall soon see, these very individuals who stood at the heart of Vilna's kehillah were also the most appreciative of the burgeoning developments in Berlin and Königsberg. The East Prussian city of Königsberg, the site of much of the early maskilic activities of the 1780's, was as geographically close to Vilna as was Shklov or Brisk; and although the latter cities were politically separate and culturally distinct, it is fairly clear that their inhabitants were in steady contact with Königsberg and other centers of German-Jewish life. Throughout the latter half of the eighteenth century, the learned and monied elite in Vilna had numerous opportunities to meet with individual Lithuanian Jewish writers and schol-

ars—Yehudah b. Mordechai Hurwitz, Yehudah Leib Margoliot, Pinhas Eliyahu Hurwitz, and Barukh Schick of Shklov—who had between them considerable appreciation for the personalities and happenings in Berlin.[15] By dint of their education and socio-economic status, members of the Peseles family were in regular contact with their co-religionists in Prussia, and they were clearly attuned to contemporary developments. As such, when the prospectus for Moses Mendelssohn's new edition of the Bible began to circulate, it made its way to Vilna as quickly and as naturally as it did to other localities.[16] Despite the fact that a German translation would seem to have little appeal in Vilna, this edition of the Bible was the first significant publication in Hebrew to emerge from Mendelssohn's circle, and it attracted attention there. With fourteen subscribers, the Jews of Vilna demonstrated a degree of support comparable to the kehillot of Hamburg and Breslau; a few years later *Ha-Me'asef* too found a number of readers here.[17] Members of the Peseles family were prominent among the subscribers to both publications.[18]

Much of the evidence known to us regarding the reception of these maskilic writings in Vilna are plainly of an anecdotal and hearsay quality, and therefore, in the absence of corroboration, ultimately of little value in probing the attitudes towards the Haskalah at the end of the eighteenth century.[19] In light of this problem, perhaps the best measure of the reception of the German Haskalah in Vilna remains the letters and activities of the Peseles family. Of particular interest in this regard was the arrival in Vilna of Mendelssohn's original partner in his Bible project, Solomon Dubno (1738-1813). Much has been written about the abrupt departure of Dubno from Berlin and his unreconciled split with Mendelssohn, and the entire episode need not be repeated here.[20] One consequence of Dubno's departure, however, was the fact that after investing much time and effort into this project, he was left holding the unpublished fruits of his hard work, including an introduction to the Hebrew Bible and sections of a commentary to all five books of the Pentateuch.[21] Dubno naturally decided to capitalize on his efforts and spent a good part of the 1780s rounding up approbations and funding to support the publication of his own edition of the Bible. Sometime in late 1782 or early 1783 he reached Vilna and found a warm and supportive patron in Joseph Peseles. Among other gestures of support, this member of Peseles family asked him to contribute his Masoretic expertise to a writing of a complete Tanakh on parchment which he had commissioned.[22]

There are two related features of Peseles' patronage of Dubno that are important for our purposes. First, it was evident that Dubno's

Bible was broadly perceived as a substantive extension of his earlier scholarly work on the Mendelssohn edition of the Bible in Berlin. Second, Peseles and others in Vilna who extended their support to Dubno did so without the slightest concern that the maskilic quality of his writings was somehow culturally foreign to Vilna. From the letters of approbation signed by Joseph and Aryeh Leib Peseles and by R. Noah Mendes (Joseph's brother-in-law), it is clear that the only substantive difference between Dubno's Bible and that of Mendelssohn was the absence of a German translation, which they matter-of-factly noted as something irrelevant to Lithuanian readers. The Peseles letter suggested that Dubno's project and the Mendelssohn edition of the Bible would not preempt one another. The fact that Dubno's edition would not contain a German translation was treated as if this concession to local realities constituted little more than a practical selling point.[23] Both these commendations, moreover, mentioned the Mendelssohn Bible in ways that they assumed would be helpful to Dubno. Indeed, the letter signed by Peseles praised Mendelssohn and his Bible in terms that were surprising only in that they completely disregarded the rift between him and Dubno.[24] Finally, in a series of private letters to David Friedlander in Berlin, Joseph Peseles allowed that some of the support Dubno gained in other European communities was really motivated by animosity towards Mendelssohn. This comment was again telling because Peseles made it clear that he did not identify with such an attitude, and instead endeavored in these very letters to effect a reconciliation between these two men.[25]

Like any patrician clan invested in the lay leadership of their community and tied by marriage to its rabbinate, members of the Peseles family undoubtedly enjoyed considerable influence and power while bearing many social, religious, and philanthropic responsibilities. The communal status and expectations conferred on the Peseles' surely gave them every reason to act publicly in measured, even conservative, ways, and to pursue communal stability and peace as a valuable end in itself. The acrimonious battle that erupted over the position of the Chief Rabbi in the 1780s apparently affected the Peseles' businesses rather significantly, and they had struggled to establish some degree of communal harmony.[26] In cultural terms too, this family had little to gain by associating with individuals or movements that deviated—or were even perceived to deviate—from the religious and scholarly norms that pervaded a community like Vilna. It is therefore important to appreciate the fact that the various approbations and letters issued by members of this family in the 1780s did not in any way perceive the writings coming out of Berlin as controversial. The shifting cultures of Berlin and Vilna may have had their own distinctive

characters, but they were apparently still regarded as being on the same continuum.

The question, of course, is to what degree such an attitude was unique to this family. Was it also shared by others among the learned elite of Vilna? It has long been noted that the circle around the Vilna Gaon called for a rectification of the perceived failings of Jewish education, stressing, among other things, the importance of Hebrew language study and an appreciation for *peshuto shel mikra*. The exegetical writings of the members of this circle certainly did not eschew the well-worn rabbinic-homiletic traditions of centuries past, but, in some important ways, neither did the writings of Mendelssohn and Dubno.[27] In Vilna, as in Berlin, there appears to have been some sustained interest in the philological-textual exegesis of medievals such as R. Abraham Ibn Ezra, R. Samuel b. Meir, and R. David Kimḥi.[28] An approbation written for Dubno's Bible by R. Shlomoh Zalman, one of a handful of scholars clustered around the Vilna Gaon, specifically praised his work for its attention to textual issues and its creativity in the realm of *peshat*.[29] The scholars of Vilna, to be sure, were not producing the kind of *parshanut* found in the *Bi'ur* of Mendelssohn's edition of the Bible, with its sustained interest in grammar, biblical accentuation, poetics, and realia. But while the exegetical interests of Berlin were new and distinct, they were not foreign to the elite of Vilna. In their attitude towards the writings coming out of Berlin, Joseph Peseles and others did not appear to be purposefully ignoring real cultural discrepancies; from where they stood, they thought they saw something they could recognize and applaud.

II

The philanthropic and scholarly predilections of Joseph Peseles and other members of his family clearly benefitted Dubno in the patronly commendation and support he received from them, and in this, he was not alone. Honoring the principle that the needs of one's own community took precedence over those of others, this family was highly conscientious with regard to its support of the learned intelligentsia of Vilna as a whole. Among those in the circle of the Gaon was the above-mentioned R. Shlomoh Zalman, or R. Zelmeleh as he was known, who was supported by Joseph Peseles as well as by his father-in-law, Yehiel Mikhel Peseles.[30] Another beneficiary of this largesse was R. Yehezkel Feivel, whose writings repeatedly singled out Joseph and Aryeh Leib Peseles for effusive praise. In a work published in 1790, R. Yehezkel Feivel lauded them both by name, adding

that he would be forever grateful to them for "raising me up from my lowly circumstances to elevate my name [in] your circle, 'sitting as brothers together' (Ps. 133:1) deliberating heavenly matters."[31]

It is not known if R. Yeḥezkel Feivel's relationship with the Peseles family pre-dated his marriage to Baer Peseles' niece, but at some point in the early 1780's he began spending time in Vilna, and it was then that he met R. Shlomoh Zalman and had occasion to get to know him.[32] Whatever the real substance and depth of this relationship may have been, their meeting forever linked their names and reputations. As one of the handful of the Gaon's students or inner circle, the name of R. Shlomoh Zalman was sure to be recognized and remembered by subsequent generations, but his memorialization would have been limited to a few rather brief passages.[33] R. Yeḥezkel Feivel's rise to the position of *maggid* of Vilna would also have earned him honorable mention among the notables of that city, but his place in history would have been limited only to a footnote in the rich scholarly culture that was nineteenth-century Lithuania. The appearance of *Toldot Adam*, a broadly conceived hagiographic and didactic work, offered Eastern European Jewry a detailed and vivid portrait of R. Shlomoh Zalman infused with an intimate idealization of Lithuanian piety, saintliness, and scholarship. As its author, R. Yeḥezkel Feivel's literary creation placed him at the elbows of a singularly unusual individual, thereby linking him - if only as a literary artifice—to one of the most venerated circles of modern Ashkenazic culture.

The very publication of *Toldot Adam*, then, was a tangible manifestation of the social and communal bonds which delineated the elite of late eighteenth-century Vilna. The common ties of R. Shlomoh Zalman and R. Yeḥezkel Feivel to the Peseles family are everywhere evident in this book. The first of two approbations was a letter not from the rabbinical court of Vilna, but from distinguished individuals "among whom R. Shlomoh Zalman resided for much of his life," and was signed by R. Dov Baer Treves,[34] R. Noah Lifschütz, and Aryeh Leib and Zevi Hirsch Peseles.[35] R. Yeḥezkel Feivel then returned the favor by warmly dedicating *Toldot Adam* to Joseph Peseles and these two nephews of his, adding his conviction that the merit of their unfailing support of R. Shlomoh Zalman would bestow blessings upon their homes. The circle was completed in the body of the book itself, for the above-mentioned members of the Peseles family are repeatedly cited as primary sources for R. Shlomoh Zalman's life and teachings.[36]

The question, quite naturally, was how these ties of patronage, family, and scholarship came to expression in the substance of this work and in the cultural interests that all these individuals presum-

ably shared. As with any work of this nature, the cultural presuppositions of *Toldot Adam* must be seen as those of the biographer and not of his subject or patrons. And yet, given the context within which this book appeared, the content of R. Yeḥezkel Feivel's work certainly represented more than the cultural pursuits of one individual. Virtually all those who knew R. Shlomoh Zalman, including scholars like R. Ḥayyim of Volozhin and others cited extensively throughout the work, were still flourishing when the first part of *Toldot Adam* appeared in 1801, as were Joseph and Aryeh Leib Peseles.[37] R. Yeḥezkel Feivel wrote a book that would solemnly honor the tragically brief life of R. Shlomoh Zalman and draw favorable attention to his teachings and ideas. It was plainly evident that nothing contained in this book would aim to be even the slightest bit objectionable; if nothing else, R. Yeḥezkel Feivel would obviously not want to embarrass his patrons. From what we can garner regarding the reception of this book and R. Yeḥezkel Feivel's subsequent appointment as *maggid* of Vilna, it would certainly appear that *Toldot Adam* had fit seamlessly into the cultural fabric of its time and place.[38]

This last point is important in consideration of Immanuel Etkes' argument that some of the broad themes and perspectives of *Toldot Adam* reflected a divergence from existing patterns of traditional Jewish culture, particularly in its affinity for medieval rationalism and Enlightenment thinking. According to Etkes, these divergent ideas—among them the religious value of scientific study, the importance of orderly pedagogic development, and an appreciation for language and Bible study—were not in and of themselves innovative, but still represented "a new and distinct [cultural] variegation within traditional society . . . which tended to some degree towards the outlook characteristic of the Haskalah."[39]

The question of *Toldot Adam*'s maskilic proclivities and its place in the cultural matrix of late eighteenth-century Vilna is further sharpened by the fact that, among the sources employed by R. Yeḥezkel Feivel, one finds unattributed passages from 'Azariah de Rossi's *Me'or 'Enayim* and various writings of Mendelssohn and Wessely. The appearance of this and other material in *Toldot Adam* is not my original observation; in fact, it had already been noted as early as the first half of the nineteenth century by writers such as Isaac Baer Levinsohn and Mattityahu Shtrashun.[40] However, it is apparent from Levinsohn's rather lengthy list of unattributed material that made its way into *Toldot Adam* that R. Yeḥezkel Feivel was not merely avoiding controversy over what may have been perceived as unorthodox material. Whether the result of shoddy notetaking or a simple lack of scholarly integrity, his impropriety was not limited to maskilic materi-

al only, but extended through a considerable list of plainly unobjectionable sources.[41] This does not mean, of course, that R. Yehezkel Feivel harbored no apprehension about using the writings of Mendelssohn or Wessely openly. Still, the fact that he did not cite these Maskilim by name cannot necessarily be taken to imply an unreceptive or hostile audience. It should also be noted, along these lines, that the unattributed appropriation of sources was rather uneven; while some passages lifted wholesale from maskilic writings were substantively central to the didactic purposes of *Toldot Adam*, other lines were materially insignificant and appeared to have been lifted only for their refined expressiveness or turn of phrase.[42]

From the sources utilized in the writing of *Toldot Adam*, it is evident that R. Yehezkel Feivel had access to much of what was coming out of Berlin and Königsberg in the 1780's: Mendelssohn's *Sefer Netivot ha-Shalom*,[43] Wessely's *Divrei Shalom ve-Emet*,[44] Wessely's introduction to the Hebrew translation of Mendelssohn's *Phaedon*[45], and *Naḥal ha-Besor*, the prospectus announcing the publication of *Ha-Me'asef*.[46] Whether R. Yehezkel Feivel first encountered this literature in Vilna or on one of his trips to Breslau or elsewhere cannot be determined, but it is clear that he would have had every opportunity to peruse such material in a number of Vilna homes. Far more significant, however, is the fact that the appearance of maskilic writings in *Toldot Adam* enables us to reconsider in substantive terms the question that lies at the heart our inquiry. If one is correctly to gauge the transitional or anticipatory character of the learned culture of Vilna, it is necessary to proceed in terms far more precise than generalized references to certain shared interests in the Berlin and Vilna communities. The utilization of the works of Mendelssohn and Wessely offers a distinctive vantage point from which to probe both *Toldot Adam* and the culture for which it was written. How did R. Yehezkel Feivel read the sources he was citing, and why, in light of the availability of other sources, did he find them useful or worthwhile? What, indeed, do these passages of maskilic literature tell us regarding a limited cultural continuum between Berlin and Vilna?

III

There are three sections of *Toldot Adam* that bear particular consideration precisely because they appear to display a general cultural affinity with the values of the German Haskalah—e.g., educational reform and a renewed emphasis on Hebrew language and Bible study—as well as a substantive appropriation of its literature. The

first of these appears at the beginning of the third chapter as part of a discussion of educational priorities and the importance of Bible study. Well before this juncture of the book, it is apparent that R. Yeḥezkel Feivel wove his exposition of the precocious childhood of R. Shlomoh Zalman with a discernable didactic leitmotif. At the beginning of *Toldot Adam*, this youngster was described as having grasped the fundamental value of proper order in education, always moving from a general and comprehensive analysis of a subject to the manifold details contained therein. Insisting that R. Shlomoh Zalman came to this approach by way of his own reasoned introspection and not through any teacher, R. Yeḥezkel Feivel underscored the natural and self-evident correctness of such a pedagogic method while not so subtly inviting comparison with existing modes of study. It was no small irony, one should add, that the first example cited in demonstration of this discipline—implicitly attributed to the testimony of R. Ḥayyim of Volozhin—was copied verbatim from Mendelssohn's own overview of the Pentateuch in the introduction to his Bible.[47]

The second chapter continued with this theme, identifying the pure pursuit of truth for its own sake with those who explicate texts with precision and clarity, pointing to the good example of some unnamed Sephardim as well as a few notable seventeenth-century Ashkenazic scholars. The third chapter further developed these ideas but now focused on the specific value of Bible study. Towards that end, R. Yeḥezkel Feivel began by explicitly citing the writings of R. Isaiah Horowitz, R. Jacob Emden and others, all of whom were critical of the Ashkenazic inattention to Scripture and Hebrew grammar and called for some pedagogic redress.[48] The real focus of the discussion, however, turns not so much on the intrinsic importance of *miḳra* but on its substantive and disciplinary value for the study of rabbinics, and the concomitant damage done to proper Talmud study in its absence.

At this juncture, in a paragraph that vaguely appeared as if it was part of R. Emden's own discussion, *Toldot Adam* went on at some length describing the pedagogic confusion that resulted from premature graduation from the study of Scripture and Mishnah to that of Talmud. Since we have reversed the proper order in education, wrote R. Yeḥezkel Feivel,

> we have increased the impoverishment of the Torah among Jews, for in his early years even the mind of a bright lad is too tender to handle the halakhic discourse of the Talmud. Most of the issues themselves are beyond his comprehension, for how can a lad inca-

> pable of understanding relationships study the laws of marriage and sexual relations, of betrothal, *ketuvot*, and divorce. And how can a boy who does not appreciate commercial dealings, cannot comprehend the difficulties of earning a living, and does not know the allure of money in acquiring a reputation and honor or in dominating others—how will he study the pecuniary laws which speak of fraudulent schemes and deceits that people devise for gain. If this happens with the bright lad, how much more so with an average child. They do not learn with delight, but out of fear of the strap, and when most of these students (aside from the exceptional few) reach thirteen years of age they flee school. Their fathers, who initially pictured these children as scholars, agree to let them abandon their studies, for they see that there is no benefit . . .[49]

This passage, however, does not belong to R. Emden's writings but was copied from the fourth essay of Wessely's *Divrei Shalom ve-Emet*.[50]

The use of this particular section of Wessely's letter is most telling. The writings of this Maskil had much to say on the issue of Jewish education in general and the study of Hebrew language and Scripture in particular, but Wessely had himself insisted—and *Toldot Adam* clearly concurred—that this concern was not at all original.[51] What was new in *Divrei Shalom ve-Emet*, however, was Wessely's attempt to effect a shift in some deep-seated cultural attitudes toward Talmud study. Citing pedagogic and sociological realities, Wessely essentially argued that universal (male) immersion in rabbinics at a very early age was having a far-reaching deleterious effect, for children lacked the requisite maturity and experience to study it properly. Most students gained little from hours of Talmud-study, and, given the prevailing modes of Jewish education, had little broad-based learning upon which to fall back. The result, in his estimation, was a widespread disaffection from traditional learning and the existence of some Jews with a perilously weak appreciation for even the fundamentals of Jewish practices and beliefs.

R. Yehezkel Feivel, to be sure, did not here include the ultimate thrust of Wessely's argument; that given the misguided attempt to treat every Jewish boy as if he were a scholar-in the-making, Talmud should properly be introduced relatively late in a child's education, and for most, perhaps only minimally or not at all. Still, Wessely's critique of the role played by Talmud study and its negative consequences went beyond the oft-cited pronouncements of Maharal, R. Isaiah Horowitz, or R. Emden. The insertion of this passage of *Divrei Shalom ve-Emet* into this discussion suggests that this line of argumentation appealed to R. Yehezkel Feivel precisely because it ad-

vanced and sharpened criticisms already well-worn with time.[32] Furthermore, the fact that our author wove together these particular sources would appear to indicate that he perceived at least a degree of cultural continuity between the positions of R. Emden and Wessely. It is true that the omission of Wessely's name may well have been prompted by a desire to avoid the controversy that had arisen around this Berlin maskil, but this did not necessarily imply disapproval of Wessely or a desire to distance *Toldot Adam* from the substantive thrust of his writings.

There is, moreover, further evidence here of the degree to which R. Yeḥezkel Feivel may have identified with the cultural perspective articulated in the writings of Wessely. In his call for more attention to Hebrew grammar, for example, our author cited R. Emden's work in his desire to insist that such instruction be of a general and useful nature, warning that preoccupation with theoretical linguistic minutiae was a thorough waste of time.[33] A little further on, R. Yeḥezkel Feivel cautioned his readers about another, far more ominous problem: to be wary of those teachers whose adherence to normative traditions in their personal religious lives was questionable or plainly wanting. *Toldot Adam* vividly describes such individuals as "masters of Scripture (*ba'alei ha-mikra*) who capriciously upend the words of the Lord, taking lightly God's commands and casting off the yoke of heaven. . . ."[34] With regard to both the study of Hebrew grammar and Scripture, then, R. Yeḥezkel Feivel was careful to circumscribe the ways in which these pedagogic reforms would have to be applied. However necessary he considered this cultural corrective to be, it could not be embraced imprudently.

It would appear, as Immanuel Etkes has suggested, that the second caveat cited here was directed at the threat of Maskilim who had already turned against traditional patterns of Jewish life.[35] It is significant, however, that the very reservations expressed by R. Yeḥezkel Feivel clearly paralleled those articulated by Wessely himself. If so, the Lithuanian *maggid* was not so much as warning against the Berlin maskilim in general as sharing the concerns of one of its most visible representatives. In a section of *Divrei Shalom ve-Emet* detailing his ideas for curricular reforms—a small part of which appeared in truncated form in *Toldot Adam*,[36]—Wessely had spoken of exposing children only to general grammatical principles and not the unhelpful subtleties of many weighty grammatical tomes.[37] Wessely's writings, including texts certainly known to R. Yeḥezkel Feivel, also expressed a significant amount of anxiety regarding those Jews who would turn their backs on traditional practices and interpretations.[38] As such, the concerns expressed here by R. Yeḥezkel Feivel may well have been

prompted by his recognition of an early maskilic antagonism towards tradition, although it is equally possible that he may have been repeating certain reservations expressed in Wessely's work itself. Whatever the case, both the cultural affirmations and concerns of this section of *Toldot Adam* underscore an appreciation for Wessely's writings and a significant degree of cultural affinity between them.

IV

In the call for greater attention to Hebrew and Bible study described above, R. Yeḥezkel Feivel had specifically identified the substantive qualities that should characterize Jewish teachers of Scripture. Such a teacher, he wrote, would have to be "a master of Scripture and grammar and a master of the Oral Law, in such a way that the clear *peshat* and our trustworthy traditions converge and are not set apart."[59] In the next chapter of *Toldot Adam*, with our author turning again to the subject of R. Shlomoh Zalman and his unwavering commitment to the study of biblical language and texts, this particular interest in correlating the Bible and rabbinic literature emerges as somewhat of a touchstone. Rabbinic texts, R. Shlomoh Zalman is reported as having said, "were for me like open windows through which the light of the Torah shone . . . for the passages of Scripture are abbreviated expressions which contain innumerable *halakhot*."[60] A few paragraphs later, R. Shlomoh Zalman is described as having been long absorbed by the problem of how it was that certain rabbinic pronouncements were not provided with exegetical basis or justification. As such, R. Shlomoh Zalman set out

> to demonstrate from where they were Scripturally derived, and from whence the shepherds of Israel drew these matters. Sometimes he would link halakhic matters to Scripture by way of clear *peshat*, and sometimes by way of *asmakhta*, all of which was done without being forced and in a way that was quite acceptable to any discerning individual.[61]

Toldot Adam then went on at some length providing examples of R. Shlomoh Zalman's appreciation for the biblical text and the ways in which it served as a basis for rabbinic learning.

Towards the end of this fourth chapter, R. Yeḥezkel Feivel returned yet again to this notion, now ambitiously setting forth a broad principled approach to the relationship of Scripture and its rabbinic interpretations, especially in matters of Halakhah. The crux of his

thinking revolved around a distinction between rabbinic *derashot* that contradicted the *peshat* and those that complemented it:

> Complementary matters have the possibility of both being correct and true; therefore, anywhere that the *peshat* is distinct but complementary to the *derash* [and] not opposed to it—the Scriptural verse does not lose its plain meaning,[62] and the *derashah* is maintained. For then, the plain sense of Scripture is the primary and essential meaning, and the *derashah* is the second meaning to which the speaker also intended, as is the way of one proficient in language occasionally to intend to say different things in one phrase. . . .
>
> However, if the approach which appears to us to be the plain sense of Scripture contradicts and opposes the received *derash* transmitted to us from the Sages, such that both of them cannot be right (for a contradiction is impossible), then we are obligated to follow the approach of *derash* . . . for we have only the tradition of our Sages, and in their light do we see light.[63]

This articulation, which stands in appreciable contrast to the literary and conceptual language of the rest of the chapter, was neither that of R. Shlomoh Zalman nor R. Yeḥezkel Feivel, but was copied verbatim from Mendelssohn's *Or li-Netivah*, the general introduction to his *Sefer Netivot ha-Shalom*.[64]

In the context of Mendelssohn's own work, however, this passage did not represent his definitive explication of the relationship of *peshat* and *derash*. It was, rather, a programmatic strategy for the problems unique to a biblical translation. With regard to the general question of how to enunciate the hermeneutical relationship of rabbinic literature to Scripture, Mendelssohn did not really admit of contradictions between these two interpretative approaches; the words of the biblical text, rather, were seen as euphoniously yielding a number of possible meanings. Since each language was unique and distinct, the multivalence of a word or phrase in one language could not readily be captured in another. As a translator, then, Mendelssohn's German would have to privilege one meaning at the expense of the other, and hence his attempt to explain systematically the determinations of these choices.[65]

Interestingly, after copying this passage from Mendelssohn, R. Yeḥezkel Feivel went on to offer another approach to the question of *peshat* and *derash*. Citing the well-known talmudic dictum that "Scripture never loses its plain meaning,"[66] he argued that its true intention was to teach that a "*derashah* is in all instances the correct

peshat and cannot in any way diverge from the *peshat* of a written verse." A few lines later he wrote that these two exegetical modes "are joined one to the other, 'stuck together and never sundered apart' (Job 41:9), for truth cannot contradict truth." Unlike the Sages of antiquity, who "discerned the light of the true *peshat* in such a way that the *peshat* and the *derash* always 'go to one place' (Ecclesiastes 3:20)," one who perceived a contradiction between them was merely unable to comprehend the truth. Returning again to the narrative focus of this biography, R. Shlomoh Zalman was described as having endeavored to lay bare this fundamental affinity between the plain sense of Scripture and its rabbinic interpretations.[67]

Here again, R. Yehezkel Feivel's unattributed use of maskilic material is culturally telling. In the passages described above, he countered a view of *peshat* and *derash* as exegetically distinct but simultaneously sustainable by favoring an approach that appeared to collapse any real distinction between them. Although R. Yehezkel Feivel's articulation of this exegetical predilection seemed to have been his own, it was nevertheless strongly reminiscent of Wessely's formulations in his introduction to the *Bi'ur* to Leviticus—cited elsewhere in *Toldot Adam*[68]—where he had spoken of *derash* as being "nothing but the depth of Scriptural *peshat*."[69]

There is, moreover, somewhat of a curious and uneven flow to this section of the book: R. Yehezkel Feivel begins by speaking rather mechanically of how R. Shlomoh Zalman attached rabbinic readings to their Scriptural sources,[70] then introduces the passage from Mendelssohn as a "great principle, a sign between the eyes from our earlier Sages," only to end by expressing a preference for yet another conceptualization of the problem. R. Yehezkel Feivel, it seems, grafted Mendelssohn's *Or li-Netivah* onto his discussion precisely because it offered a language and exegetical framework that he found useful. Early maskilic writings took up questions of biblical exegesis in a fresh and sometimes original fashion, and from the perspective of turn of-the century Vilna, there was something attractive about them. Even when our author would seem to prefer one articulation over others, the broader sense of a cultural continuum is again underscored. The ideas and writings emanating from Berlin had struck an appreciative chord in Lithuania.

V

Towards the end of the first part of *Toldot Adam*, finally, there appears another important section which bears careful consideration.

Beginning with the thirteenth chapter, R. Yehezkel Feivel took up the question of how to study *aggadah*, here stating plainly that he heard little from R. Shlomoh Zalman on this topic and was therefore setting forth his own thoughts. In this particular instance, what followed was neither his own writing nor that of maskilic origin, but some passages taken from a classical sixteenth-century tome written by 'Azariah de Rossi, *Me'or 'Enayim*.[71] Despite the fact that this book predated the Haskalah by two centuries and was not borne out of its cultural milieu, its significance with regard to our inquiry is manifold. Two centuries after its first printing, this book was proudly brought to press in 1794 by the organized society of the Berlin Haskalah, the *Hevrat Hinukh Ne'arim*. More importantly, *Me'or 'Enayim* was highly attractive to the early Haskalah because it represented precisely the kind of work that gave expression to their own cultural predilections. Steeped in the classical texts of Judaism, *Me'or 'Enayim* openly engaged western literature and was self-consciously determined to question rabbinic legends as reliable sources of historical truth. In their effort to uphold legitimate but long-ignored cultural traditions, Maskilim embraced the kind of critical independence manifest in *Me'or 'Enayim* and readily identified with its aims.

The poignancy of R. Yehezkel Feivel's unattributed use of this sixteenth century text was underscored by his awareness of the controversy it had generated. *Toldot Adam* begins its exposition of *aggadah* by citing the long tradition of non-literal interpretation, drawing rather liberally and appreciatively on 'Azariah's writing. Later on in the text, however, our author insisted that there were nevertheless rabbinic passages that had to be understood literally, and then went on to add the following:

> There was one scholar from among our nation, a truly God-fearing individual as the scholar R. Jacob Emden testified, who nevertheless was found to be in the breach. For in some instances, he removed the words of our Sages from their plain sense and true *peshat*, rendering the essence of their stories as teaching only some wisdom or rational concept. . . . Already in his day a great sage protested against him, and subsequently all those of straight heart cried out and shouted against this scholar.[72]

In its context, the references to R. Emden and the criticisms of a "great sage," R. Judah Loew b. Bezalel, made it fairly clear that the unnamed scholar in question was 'Azariah de Rossi.[73]

As with the maskilic sources discussed above, R. Yehezkel Feivel's equivocal evaluation of 'Azariah de Rossi reflected a telling cultural

posture. Despite his considerable reliance upon *Me'or 'Enayim* and other (mainly attributed) medieval writings, our author's initial exposition of non-literal interpretations of *aggadah* offered some fresh and perspicacious ideas. After citing 'Azariah's presentation of Judah Halevi and the argument that the Sages truly possessed extraordinary exegetical acumen,[74] R. Yeḥezkel Feivel went on to discuss three different kinds of aggadic uses of Scripture. The first of these, a stylistic-rhetorical handling of the Bible that was here alternatively referred to as *asmakhta* or *melizah*, was identified with the well-known use of the latter term in Maimonides' *Moreh Nevukhim* (III:43). But our author, relating what he had heard from a "certain scholar," amplified this notion of *melizah* by explaining it as a kind of literary biblicism, not unlike the idiomatic use—and alteration—of certain biblical phrases in everyday conversation. Such uses of Scripture, naturally, were not exegetically intended and thus should not impugn the textual acumen of the Sages. The same held true for another category of *aggadot*, he continued, which represented a kind of a poetic-hyperbolic citation of Scripture (*shir ve-haflugah*).[75]

The third type of *aggadah* enumerated in this chapter, finally, were parables and tales that were to be regarded as a font for esoteric ideas. Taking his cue from *Me'or 'Enayim* and 'Azariah's citation of another contemporary scholar, R. Yeḥezkel Feivel articulated some perceptive and thoughtful ideas concerning the differences between biblical and rabbinic allegory, focusing his inquiry on the didactic qualities of the different allegorical forms.[76] Then, in ways reminiscent of earlier medieval discussions, he took up the issue of how post-talmudic scholars could allow themselves to speak openly about the purposefully esoteric notions buried in biblical and rabbinic literature. Writing again with insight and vigor, he differentiated between antiquity and the post-rabbinic age, arguing that the particular realities of the latter necessitated such a move.[77]

The thirteenth chapter of *Toldot Adam* was thus intended to defend the honor of the Sages of late antiquity. The tenor of the ideas contained therein sounds much like those of medieval rationalists and exegetes of medieval Spain and Provence who collectively and emphatically attempted to demonstrate that the rabbinic tradition was neither textually inept nor rationally naive. R. Yeḥezkel Feivel appeared wholly comfortable with the intellectual posture of this approach, not only by expressing these ideas as his own, but by bringing a notable degree of literary sensibility to his discussion of the rabbinic uses of Scripture.

It is thus striking that in the very next chapter, R. Yehezkel Feivel reaches again for medieval sources, but now gives expression to a different scholarly sensibility. The substantive direction of the chapter is quickly established by his above-mentioned criticism of 'Azariah de Rossi and his insistence on the literal truth of some rabbinic passages. Citing some fairly conventional material allegedly preserved in the responsa of R. Samuel b. Abraham ibn Adret,[78] he begins by outlining the criteria by which the veracity of rabbinic statements could be evaluated.[79] The upshot of his categorical distinctions is to offer a strictly circumscribed set of conditions which allow for—and compel—non-literal interpretations, always in the interest of preserving truths that are essential and immutable. Applied to *aggadah*, it meant that most rabbinic statements needed to be taken literally, either because they merely contradicted some natural law or principle (but not an immutable truth) or because they served to strengthen some central belief.

The difference between these chapters went beyond the fact that the first concerned itself with the genre of *midrash* and rabbinic exegesis while the second addressed itself to *aggadot* and the genre of stories and parables. The openness to literary and esoteric interpretations of *midrashim* evident in chapter thirteen bespoke an attempt to avoid even the slightest denigration of the Sages' perspicacity, an effort that was predicated upon granting broad latitude in how such texts were to be read in light of scientific, philosophical, or linguistic imperatives. These were, of course, the very impulses that informed the writings of Mendelssohn and Wessely, and, given R. Yehezkel Feivel's appreciation of aspects of Berlin culture, this appeared to be an identification that he himself appreciated. Chapter fourteen, however, articulated a very different cultural perspective. Although certain allowances and qualifications were made, the overbearing thrust of R. Yehezkel Feivel's discussion there was a linkage of the need to respect the authority of the Sages with an imperative to take their words at face value. The concern for how rabbinic scholars might appear to a sophisticated readership was not operative here, and one was, in fact, deterred from taking a broad latitude in interpreting *aggadah*. The allowance of such latitude, rather, was rendered synonymous with a certain disrespect for the Sages. Such attitudes may or may not have been representative of the prevailing rabbinic culture of Eastern Europe, but they were clearly removed from what R. Yehezkel Feivel knew to be the spirit of the nascent Haskalah.

VI

In the intellectual and religious landscape of the late eighteenth century, the disparate cultural affinities of *Toldot Adam* aptly reflected some of the variegated realities of Eastern European Jewry. Like his patrons, R. Yeḥezkel Feivel was familiar with the ideas and texts emanating from Berlin, and, to a considerable degree, he seemed comfortable engaging them. By dint of family, his writings, and his later communal position as *maggid*, it is clear that R. Yeḥezkel Feivel also saw himself as part of the burgeoning Jewish culture of Vilna. From his vantage point in Lithuania, his concurrent appreciation for these two ascendent cultural centers did not appear to be fraught with overbearing tension. In his qualification and shading of maskilic ideas and ideals, to be sure, R. Yeḥezkel Feivel displayed appreciable discernment and some critical distance. Still, this engagement of the Berlin Haskalah not only reflected an internalization of some of its early writings, but underscored the degree to which maskilic articulations gave form and substance to his own cultural prerogatives. The importance of *Toldot Adam*, then, rests on its expression of an historical moment wherein its author, and perhaps its patrons and even readers, would not, or could not, wholly differentiate between the cultural sensibilities of Vilna and Berlin.

Notes

1. Immanuel Etkes, "Ha-Gra ve-ha-Haskalah: Tadmit u-Mezi'ut," in I. Etkes and Y. Salmon, eds., *Perakim be Toldot ha-Hinnuch ha-Yehudit bi-Yemei ha-Benayim u-va-'et ha-Hadashah* (Jerusalem, 1980), 192-217; idem, "Li-She'elat Mevasrei ha-Haskalah be-Mizrah Eropah," *Tarbiz* 57 (1987): 95-114 [reprinted in Immanuel Etkes, ed., *Ha-Dat ve-ha Hayyim: Tenu'at ha-Haskalah ha Yehudit be-Mizrah Eropah* (Jerusalem, 1993), 25-44]. An English version of this article appeared as "Immanent Factors and External Influences in the Development of the Haskalah Movement in Russia," in Jacob Katz, ed., *Toward Modernity: The European Jewish Model* (New Brunswick, 1987), 13-32. Since the Hebrew and English versions of this last article differ slightly, I will have occasion to cite both in this paper. For the quote cited here, see Etkes, "Mevasrei ha-Haskalah," 99.
2. Azriel Shochat, *Im Hilufei Tekufot* (Jerusalem, 1960), especially pp. 198-260.
3. I. Etkes, "Immanent Factors," 25-30.
4. The relevance of this text to the broad questions posed here was first recognized by Hayyim Hillel Ben-Sasson, "Ishiyuto shel ha-Gra ve-Hashpa'ato ha-Historit," *Zion* 31 (1966), 47, n. 25.
5. The basic biographical information available to us is found in Samuel Joseph Fünn, *Kiryah Ne'emanah* (Vilna, 1915), 241-44; Hillel Noah Steinschneider, *'Ir Vilna* (Vilna, 1900), 87-88.
6. S.J. Fünn, *Kiryah Ne'emanah*, 241, suggested that R. Yeḥezkel Feivel had already established himself in Dereczhin before he set out on his travels through Poland and Galicia, but the letters of praise to which Fünn refers in his footnotes, written

by the luminaries of Lemberg and Brody and dating from 1776, only refer to him as "from Palanga" or the "*maggid* of Palanga." Fünn, however, may have known some of this biographical information from R. Yeḥezkel Feivel's eldest son, R. Shlomoh Zalman Ze'ev Wolf, with whom he apparently spent some time (see H.N. Steinschneider, *ibid*, ix). The chronology may be important in determining where, and when, R. Yeḥezkel Feivel first came into contact with the work of the Berlin Haskalah.

7. *Musar Haskel* (Dyhernfurth, 1790); reprinted in Warsaw 1854, Lublin, 1924, and Brooklyn, 1955. The commentary to *Hilkhot De'ot* alone was printed as part of a book titled *Likutei Pardes* (Polonnoye, 1813).
8. This commentary appeared in the Vilna 1878 edition of *Midrash Rabbah* as *Bi'ureī Maharif*, and only includes notes to Genesis, Exodus, and Leviticus.
9. This is based on the fact that his eldest son was born in 1789; see H.N. Steinschneider, *'Ir Vilna*, 88.
10. S.J. Fünn, *Kiryah Ne'emanah*, 129, 200.
11. Yisrael Klausner, *Ha Ptilmus ha-Perimi be-Kehillat Vilna* (Jerusalem, 1942), 156-64; S.J. Fünn, *Kiryah Ne'emanah*, 25-26, 142.
12. S.J. Fünn, *Kiryah Ne'emanah*, 182-83; Yisrael Klausner, "R. Yosef ben Eliyahu, Kenuvo ha-Na'or shel ha-Gra mi-Vilna," *He-'Avar* 2 (1954): 73-74. As a man of wealth and learning, Eliyahu Peseles' home appeared to have been a familiar destination for travelling scholars, and one finds scattered references to those who benefitted from his hospitality. See, e.g., Yehoshua Heschel Levin, *'Aliyot Eliyahu* (Vilna, 1855), 28a.
13. I have been unable to determine Yehiel Mikhel's precise relationship to the other members of this family, although it appears that he was either a younger brother or cousin of Eliyahu Peseles. He is mentioned in *Toldot Adam*, 64b, 70b, 72a.
14. Much of this biographical information can be gleaned from S.J. Fünn's *Kiryah Ne'emanah*, 165-66, 176-77, 182-85, 225-26; H.N. Steinschneider, *'Ir Vilna*, 152, n.2 3; and Yisrael Klausner, *Korot Bet-ha-'Almin ha-Yashan be Vilna* (Jerusalem, 1972), 57-59, 110.
15. . On these figures, see Israel Zinberg, *A History of Jewish Literature* 6 (New York, 1975), 249-74; and David Fishman, "A Polish Rabbi Meets the Berlin Haskalah: The Case of R. Barukh Schick," *AJS Review* 12 (1987): 95-121.
16. The prospectus, titled *'Alim li-Terufah*, was published in Amsterdam, 1778, and is reprinted in F. Bamberger, et al., eds., *Moses Mendelssohn Gesammelte Schriften Jubiläumsausgabe* 14 (Stuttgart, 1971-1991)(henceforth *GSJ*), 321-68. The Bible edition was published as *Sefer Netivot Ha Shalom* (Berlin, 1780-1783), reprinted in *GSJ*, Vols. 15(1)-18.
17. See the subscription lists in *GSJ*, Vol 15(1), pp. 56-64; and I. Zinberg, *History of Jewish Literature*, Vol 8, p. 218.
18. Baer b. Eliyahu Peseles and his sons (Aryeh Leib, 1759-1831, and Zevi Hirsch, 1768-1817) accounted for three subscriptions of Mendelssohn's Bible, while Joseph, who effectively became the head of the family after Baer's premature death, ordered the Bible as well as two copies of *Ha-Me'asef*. See above nn. 13-14.
19. The sum of the evidence is as follows: R. Moses Schick reported in 1865 that he had earlier heard from an impeccable individual that "even a well-known *gaon* used [Mendelssohn's Bible], especially the *Bi'ur* to Leviticus." See *Likutei Teshuvot Hatam Sofer* (London, 1965), 75; R. Schick was writing to correct another version of the incident reported in R. Akiva Schlesinger's *Yad Yeri*, in which, inter alia, this passage referred to a relative of R. Moses Sofer who had also perused Mendelssohn's Bible. See *Yad Yeri*, printed in *Lev ha-Ivri* (Lemberg, 1874), following part 1. See also Lawrence Kaplan, "*Daas Torah*: A Modern Conception of Rabbinic Authority," in Moshe Sokol, ed., *Rabbinic Authority and Personal Autonomy* (Northvale, N.J., 1992), 2-3, n. 1.

The maskil Kalman Shulman made a similar claim regarding the Vilna Gaon

based on the testimony of a different source. See his introduction to Wessely's *Divrei Shalom ve-Emet* (Warsaw, 1886), 15.

On the other hand, there were statements made by R. Pinhas Horowitz of Frankfurt, R. David Tevele of Lissa, and possibly even by Wessely himself regarding the public burning of Mendelssohn's Bible and/or Wessely's *Divrei Shalom ve Emet* in Vilna. See Heinrich Graetz, *Divrei Yemei ha-Yehudim* 9 (Jerusalem, 1972), 73, and appendix 1, pp. vii-viii; M. Güdemann, "Die Gegner Hartwig Wessely's," *Monatschrift fur Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums* 19 (1870): 478-80; Heinrich Graetz, "Wessely's Gegner," *Monatschrift fur Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums* 20 (1871): 465-69; L. Lewin, "Aus dem jüdischen Kulturkampfe," *Jahrbuch der Jüdisch-Literarischen Gesellschaft* 12 (1918): 165-97, especially p. 188, and see also Israel Zinberg, *Toldot Sifrut Yisra'el* 5 (Tel Aviv, 1959), 327-28.

20. See Alexander Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn: A Biographical Study* (Philadelphia, 1973), 398-405; Moshe Samet, "M. Mendelson, N.H. Veizel, ve-Rabbanei Doram," *Mehkarim be-Toldot 'Am Yisra'el ve-Erez Yisra'el* 1 (1970): 233-57.
21. The first Volume of *Sefer Netivot Ha-Shalom* (see above, n. 16) appears with four pages of Dubno's introduction, but the printing of this essay was literally abandoned mid-sentence without any explanation. Samuel Joseph Fünn, who apparently had the manuscript of this introduction, later cited some other sections of it in *Ha-Karmel* 3:6 (1876): 306.
22. Dubno hailed Joseph for this project in a prosaic and poetic ode to him, published as *Birkhat Yosef* (Dyhernfurth, 1783). Dubno's presence in Vilna is attested to, among other things, by the existence of the anti-hasidic decree of 1781 copied in Dubno's hand (with this copy dated spring of 1783). See Mordechai Wilensky, *Hasidim u-Mitnagdim* (Jerusalem, 1970), 302-10.
23. This stands in significant contrast with the letter of approbation Dubno received from R. Yehezkel Landau, the distinguished and acclaimed Chief Rabbi of Prague, who stated that Dubno's Bible was worthy of support precisely because it did not mix "the sacred and profane" by including a German translation. See Gabriel b. Isaac Polak, *Ben Gorni* (Amsterdam, 1851), 44. The difference in perspectives clearly has everything to do with the differences between Prague and Vilna. In a German-speaking city like Prague, R. Landau was explicitly concerned with the "stumbling block to children and the *bittul torah*" that would result from such a translation; in a Slavic Vilna, this issue was nonexistent.
24. These letters are cited in S.J. Fünn, *Kiryah Ne'emanah*, 177, 225-26, and are dated 1787. It appears that Dubno either returned to Vilna at this later date or only requested the letters at this time and had them sent to him.
25. These letters are printed in S.J. Fünn, *Sofrei Yisra'el* (Vilna, 1871), 138-42. See p. 140 for the comment regarding the animosity towards Mendelssohn. See also A. Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn*, 400-02.
26. Y. Klausner, "R. Yosef ben Eliyahu," 79-83.
27. I have discussed the question of rabbinic traditions in the early Haskalah in my book, *The Limits of Enlightenment: Jews, Germans, and the Eighteenth Century Study of Scripture* (Cambridge, 1996), 177-222.
28. This kind of exegetical pursuit is evident in a manuscript of by R. Yissakhar Baer, the brother of the Vilna Gaon, and an edition of the Bible published by some Vilna Jews in 1783, both of which are described by S.J. Fünn in *Kiryah Ne'emanah*, 202, 285. See also Bezalel Landau, *Ha-Gaon he-Hasid mi-Vilna* (Jerusalem, 1965), 124-32; I. Etkes, "Ha-Gra ve ha-Haskalah," 208-09; and Jay M. Harris, *How Do We Know This? Midrash and the Fragmentation of Modern Judaism* (Albany, 1995), 234-39.
29. Cited in S.J. Fünn, *Kiryah Ne'emanah*, 166.
30. R. Shlomoh Zalman had married into this family at some point before 1781-81, since at the time of his premature death in 1788 he had left behind a daughter of seven (J.L.N. Steinschneider, *'Ir Vilna*, 175).

Despite the philanthropy and appreciation for learning evident among members of the Peseles clan, the fact that a daughter of this monied family would marry a scholar of no obvious means was not to be taken for granted. An echo of the somewhat unusual social circumstance of this marriage was heard two generations later in the writing of this couple's grandson, who went out of his way to note that his grandmother "was a daughter of the princely offspring of Vilna, and still she chose not to be a wife of one of the princes of the city but wished to have a portion of Jacob as her inheritance." See Shalom b. Joshua, *Sefer Divrei Shalom ve Emet* (Vilna, 1873), 1b.

R. Shlomoh Zalman, in any event, was fully accepted into this family and is described by R. Yehezkel Feivel as having "dwelled among them for most of his [brief] life" (*Toldot Adam*, 29a, and see also the comments in the first letter of approbation, the dedication, and p. 68b bottom). By the early 1780's, R. Shlomoh Zalman had gained a respected reputation in Vilna, and his stature was such that he was invited to sign, alongside Joseph and Aryeh Leib Peseles, the documents attached to the anti-Hasidic *herem* of 1781. See M. Wilensky, *Hasidim u-Mitnagdim*, I:10.

R. Shlomoh Zalman's membership in the Peseles family was also reflected in the fact that he shared a tombstone with Dov Baer Peseles (and another student of the Gra), which stood to the immediate right of the grave of the Gaon himself. See S.J. Fürn, *Kiryah Ne'emanah*, 167, and Eliezer Leoni, *Volozhin: Sipurah shel ha-'Ir ve-shel Yeshivat 'Ez Hayyim* (Tel-Aviv, 1970), 45.

31. *Musar Haskel*, introduction; and see H.N. Steinschneider, *'Ir Vilna*, 87.
32. *Toldot Adam*, 23a-23b.
33. See Judah Leib Margoliot, *'Azei 'Eden* (Frankfurt am Oder, 1802), 16a; the introduction of R. Saul Shiskes to *Sheril hu-Yashar*, his commentary to *Hilkhot Rav Alfas* (Vilna, 1859); and the biographical essay about the Gaon, written by his sons R. Abraham and R. Yehuda Leib and printed in the first volume of the standard edition of the *Shulhan 'Arukh*. This latter description was also the basis of the brief biographical entry that appeared in Levin's *'Aliyot Eliyahu*, 36a. R. Shlomoh Zalman was also briefly lauded in very different terms in Isaac Baer Levinsohn, *Te'udah be-Yisra'el* (Vilna and Horodna, 1828), 151-52.
34. R. Dov Baer Treves (d. 1804), was the author of *Revid ha-Zahav* (Horodna, 1797). Given that the others who signed this letter were members of the Peseles family and thus relatives of R. Yehezkel Feivel, R. Treves' signature here seems out of place. Since virtually no biographical information about him has survived, it is not known if he too had some connection to this extended family.
35. It is somewhat humorous, though telling, that the absence of Joseph Peseles' signature was apparently conspicuous enough to prompt an apologetic postscript offering an explanation.
36. See, e.g., *Toldot Adam*, 29b, 37b, 39b, 57b-58a, 59b, 60b, 94a-95a, 101a; see also the report of an exchange between R. Yehezkel Feivel, R. Shlomoh Zalman, and the latter's father-in-law, Yehiel Mikhel Peseles, on p. 64b.
37. In the introduction, R. Yehezkel Feivel stated that he was advised to identify his contemporary sources to specifically shore up the veracity of R. Shlomoh Zalman's extraordinary activities; see the previous note.
38. This is apparent in the widely-accepted biography of the Vilna Gaon, *'Aliyot Eliyahu*, where the brief entry on R. Shlomoh Zalman is accompanied by a note immediately referring the reader to *Toldot Adam*. See pp. 36a-36b.
39. I. Etkes, "Mevasrei ha-Haskalah," 104-05.
40. In an article titled "Bikkoret le-Sefer ha-Nikhbad 'Toldot Adam'" and dated 1839, Levinsohn cited a long list of specific passages that were problematic, including attributed citations that were either inaccurate or non-existent. Levinsohn, who claimed to have received a copy of *Toldot Adam* as a gift from the author himself, indicated that he had noted these problems in the margins of his copy some twenty years earlier. This "Bikkoret" was later printed in his *Yizre'el* (Warsaw,

1903), 32-43, and is mentioned in I. Etkes, "Mevasrei ha-Haskalah," 103, n. 37.

Around the time Levinsohn wrote his review, Leopold Zunz published a letter, "Hosafot le-Toldot R. 'Azariah min ha-Adumim." *Kerem Hemed* 7 (1843): 119-24, which stated that Shtrashun had written to him and pointed out that the author of *Toldot Adam* "took many passages from *Me'or 'Enayim* and other books." See pp. 120-21. The citation to this source appeared incorrectly in H.N. Steinschneider's *Ir Vilna*, 87, a problem already noted by Etkes. Credit for the correct citation above belongs to Dr. Sol Cohen.

41. This list includes R. David Kimhi, R. Menasseh b. Israel, R. Moses Hayyim Luzzatto, R. Isaiah Berlin (Pik), R. Pinhas Eliyahu Horwitz, and others. See I.B. Levinsohn, "Bikkoret le-Sefer ha Nikhbad," passim.
42. See, e.g., *Toldot Adam*, 2b (taken from Wessely's introduction to *Fe'ed'on* (see below, n. 45), iii [unpaginated]) and p. 44a (taken from *Nahal ha-Besor*, the prospectus for the journal *Ha-Me'asef*, p. 8; see below, n. 46). Unfortunately, even where R. Yehezkel Feivel cited a writer and text by name and supplied what he indicated was a full quote, one sometimes finds considerable revision and emendation.
43. See above, n. 16. Besides the *editio princips*, there were four other editions that appeared in the 1790's to which R. Yehezkel Feivel might have had access.
44. Berlin, 1782-1785. This work is actually a collection of four pamphlets, the first of which was Wessely's original manifesto published under the title *Divrei Shalom ve-Emet* in the spring of 1782. The three additional essays, published with different titles, were written by Wessely in 1782, 1784, and 1785. These essays served to defend and clarify his call for educational reform against mounting criticism. Although only the second and fourth of these essays are cited in *Toldot Adam*, it can be assumed that R. Yehezkel Feivel was also familiar with the original manifesto to which the later essays refer.
45. *Fe'ed'on, hu sefer Hash'arat ha Nefesh le-ha-Hakham ha-Shalem Rabbenu Mosheh mi-Dessoy ha-Nikra Mendelson*, trans. Yishai Be'er [Bing] (Berlin, 1787).
46. This prospectus was comprised of a description of *Ha-Me'asef*, a letter of Isaac Euchel to Wessely, and Wessely's reply, all dated in the winter of 1782-83. *Toldot Adam* made use of a few lines of Wessely's letter, *Nahal ha-Besor*, 8.
47. See *Toldot Adam*, 5b-6a, and cf. Mendelssohn's *Or le-Netivah*, reprinted in *GS*, 1(3), 21.
48. See R. Isaiah Horowitz, *Shenei Luhot ha-Berit* 1 (Jerusalem, 1970), 30b (Masekhet Shavu'ot); R. Sheftel b. Isaiah Horowitz, *Vavei ha-'Amudim*, appended to *Shenei Luhot ha Berit*, Vol. 2, p. 6b; R. Jacob Emden, *Birat Migdal 'Oz* (Zhitomir, 1874), 16b-17a. Despite the fact that the relevant passages of these texts are cited here as direct quotes, they were all edited and revised by R. Yehezkel Feivel, though without much substantive import.
49. *Toldot Adam*, 15b.
50. This essay, titled *Rebuot*, was published in Berlin in 1785. Cf. pp. 34a-34b with *Toldot Adam*, 15b.
51. For example, both Wessely and R. Yehezkel Feivel quoted the same section of R. Sheftel's *Vavei ha-'Amudim*; see Wessely's second essay, *Kav Yafe le-Bet Yisra'el* (Berlin, 1782), 34b-35a and *Toldot Adam*, 15a.
52. At this juncture *Toldot Adam* (p. 16a) also includes a parallel passage from Wessely's second essay, *Kav Yafe le-Bet Yisra'el*, 17a.
53. *Toldot Adam*, 15b; cf. R. Emden, *Birat Migdal 'Oz*, 17a.
54. P. 16b.
55. See I. Etkes, "Mevasrei ha-Haskalah," 103.
56. See above, n. 52.
57. *Kav Yafe le-Bet Yisra'el*, 15b.
58. See, e.g., *Gan Na'ul* (Amsterdam, 1765-1766), 3b-4a, 10a, 48b; Wessely's introduction to his commentary to Leviticus, in *GS*, Vol. 17, p. 6; and his letter to the editor of *Ha-Me'asef*, published as part of their *Nahal ha-Besor*, p. 8. The last two

sources were used in *Toldot Adam*, 34b, 44a, 60b-61a. See also my article "Naftali Hirz Wessely and the Cultural Dislocations of an Eighteenth-Century Maskil" in David Sorkin and Shmuel Feiner, eds., *New Perspectives on the Haskalah* [forthcoming].

59. *Toldot Adam*, 16b.
60. *Ibid.*, 20b.
61. *Ibid.*, 21a. Further along in the book (p. 23a), R. Yehezkel Feivel stated that linking law with Scripture by way of an *asmakhta* was "very far from *peshat*."
62. The phrase used here is "*en mikra yozet midei peshuto*," taken from Shabbat 63a.
63. *Toldot Adam*, 25b.
64. Cf. *GSJ*, Vol. 15(1), pp. 40-41.
65. Mendelssohn's hermeneutics as described here were more fully laid out in the introduction to his commentary to Ecclesiastes, *Sefer Megillat Kohelet* (Berlin, 1770), reprinted in *GSJ* Vol. 14, pp. 148-51; see above, n. 27. Mendelssohn's comments in this introduction included an example cited from Gen. 44:18, which may have been the basis of some similar comments in *Toldot Adam*, 44b.
66. See above, n. 62.
67. *Toldot Adam*, 26a.
68. See pp. 34b, 60b-61a.
69. See *GSJ*, Vol. 17, p. 4.
70. He specifically mentioned both *peshat* and *asmakhta* in the same sentence. See p. 21a.
71. *Me'or 'Enayim* (Mantua, 1573-1575). In his "Bikkoret le-Sefer ha-Nikhhad," 33-35, Levinsohn points out other instances in which material from this earlier book appeared in *Toldot Adam*; see, e.g., pp. 1a, 14a.
72. *Toldot Adam*, 86a.
73. 'Azariah's work actually generated opposition even as it was being printed, but R. Judah Loew's quick and forceful attack was widely known among scholars of early modern and modern Europe. See R. Judah Loew b. Bezalel, *Be'er ha-Golah* (New York, 1969), 126-41. Hostility towards this book was still evident through the eighteenth century, reinforcing its reputation as a dangerous and heretical work. For R. Emden's comments, see *She'elat Yavez* 1 (Lemberg, 1884), #33 (pp. 29a-b); and cf. R. Aviad Bar Shalom Basilea, *Sefer Emunat Hakhamim* (Johannisburg, 1859), 44a. See also Lester A. Segal, *Historical Consciousness and Religious Tradition in Azariah de' Rossi's Me'or 'Enayim* (Philadelphia, 1989), 133-70.
74. *Toldot Adam*, 78a-78b; and cf. *Me'or 'Enayim*, 74b-75a, and *Kuzari*, III:68-74.
75. *Toldot Adam*, 79a-83a.
76. *Toldot Adam*, 83a-84a. Our author cites R. Eliezer Ashkenazi, and some ideas which appear in the latter's *Ma'aseh ha-Shem* (1583). Although it is possible that R. Yehezkel Feivel was directly citing from R. Ashkenazi's work, the close resemblance of R. Yehezkel Feivel's citation of Ashkenazi's ideas with that of 'Azariah's formulation would strongly suggest that the immediate source utilized in *Toldot Adam* was *Me'or 'Enayim*. The first edition of this late-Renaissance work has a complicated publishing history, and the passage citing R. Ashkenazi appears in an appendix to some editions (under the heading *maharduri*), p. 185b. It remains unclear which version of this sixteenth-century treatise R. Yehezkel Feivel actually had in his hands, a question which would be important to answer in order to determine the full extent to which he plagiarized this work. On these textual questions in the publishing history of *Me'or 'Enayim*, see the appendix of David Cassel in the Vilna, 1866 edition. Cassel inserts the citation of R. Ashkenazi in ch. 6, p. 124 of this edition.
77. This issue arose as early as the early thirteenth century, and was taken up by a number of important medieval writers. See e.g., Samuel ibn Tibbon, *Yikkavu ha-Mayyim* (Pressburg, 1837), 172-73; Jacob b. Abba Mari Anatoli, *Malmad ha-Talmidim* (Lyck, 1866), 52b; Joseph ibn Kaspi, *Menorat Kesef* in *'Asarah Kelei Kesef* (Pressburg, 1903), 76-77; Isaac Abarbanel, "Te'anot Lekukhot mi-Teva ha-

Ketuvim Yema'anu mah she-Peresh ha-Rambam be-Merkevet Yehezkel," printed in the standard edition of Maimonides' *Moreh Nevukhim*, Part III, p. 71b, *te'amah rishonah*; and see Aviezer Ravitzky, "Samuel ibn Tibbon and the Esoteric Character of the *Guide of the Perplexed*," *AJS Review* 6 (1981): 114-16. However, with the exception of Abarbanel's writing, the texts listed here were only published for the first time in the nineteenth century, and it is not clear whether R. Yehezkel Feivel could have had access to them in manuscript. *Yikkavu ha-Mayim* was cited in 'Azariah's *Maẓref la-Kesef*, but this text, a postscript to *Me'or 'Enayim*, was also only published for the first time in 1854; see the Vilna, 1866 edition, ed. David Cassel, Part 3, pp. 120-21.

78. R. Yehezkel Feivel's wording here implies that these ideas were not Rashba's, but rather those of his correspondent. I have yet to locate any such source, and indeed, this citation may not be authentic at all.
79. *Toldot Adam*, 86a-87a. The fundamental distinction utilized here turned on the question of whether a statement contradicted a contingent truth, as, for example, the natural laws that described the physical world, or a necessary truth, best exemplified by the rules of logic or certain metaphysical propositions.