New Book Published by UCF Judaic Studies Professor Moshe Pelli

Dr. Moshe Pelli, Abe and Tess Wise Endowed Professor of Judaic Studies and Director of the Interdisciplinary Program of Judaic Studies at UCF, published a new book on the journals of the Hebrew Haskalah (Enlightenment) in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Titled The Journals of the Haskalah from 1820 to 1845 and published by the Magnes Press of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, the book includes monographs and annotated indices to eight Hebrew periodicals published in Holland, Galicia, Germany and Lithuania in the 19th century.

The monographs analyze the phenomena of the Hebrew Haskalah press, addressing major developments in the history of the Haskalah, such as the emergence of ‘Hochmat Israel’ (The scholarly study of Judaism) in Hebrew, and the emerging centers of Haskalah in Holland, Galicia, and Lithuania. The monographs study the journals and their editors, contributing authors, and the subject matters included in them, and examine their scholarly and literary qualities.

The Indices to the eight journals published in this book are cross-referenced, annotated, alphabetized, and author-and-subject listed. They cover all articles, essays, and scholarly studies on a variety of topics in Jewish Studies, such as Biblical and Talmudic criticism and commentary, questions regarding the Halachah (Jewish legal system), and studies on the Hebrew language, Jewish history, and Jewish education. They also cite newly discovered medieval Hebrew manuscripts, their critique and studies of their authors. Also included are various genres in belles lettres: poems, stories, fables, satires, aphorisms, and other writings: biographies, editorial comments and announcements.

Entries within each author and subject heading were also sorted and arranged alphabetically. Annotations were added to most entries, highlighting major ideas and topics discussed in each entry, and identifying authors, deciphering initials, and providing cross-references and some bibliographical data of cited and reviewed books. In addition, the notes update bibliographical information on related subjects in modern scholarship.

Some of the luminary scholars of the Haskalah contributed to these journals: Shmuel David Luzzatto, Shlomo Yehuda Rapoport, Nachman Krochmal, and Marcus Jost, as well as authors and poets, such as Yitzhak Erter, Shmuel Mulder, Meir Halevi Letteris and Adam Hacohen Lebenson.

Three of the journals were published by ‘Hevrat To’elet’ (To’elet Society), established in 1815. This society attempted to follow in the footsteps of the Haskalah center in Germany, which was no longer active. The group was nurtured by the literary products of the German Haskalah. In their meetings they studied some of the books by Juda Leib Ben Zeev and Naphtali Herz Wessely, and the writings published in Hame’asef. The journals were, Bikurei To’elet (First Fruits of To’elet, 1820), Pri To’elet (Fruit of To’elet, 1825), both edited by Shmuel Mulder. They were intended to represent the contents of the Society’s meetings in lectures, sermons, essays, studies, and belles lettres.

The third journal was Bikurei Hashanah (First Fruits of the Year, 1844), edited by Gabriel Pollak. This was a bi-lingual, Hebrew and Dutch, one-time publication, with two corresponding sections, and a calendar. Like the previous publications issued by the To’elet Society in the 1820s, the orientation of this periodical also adhered to moderate Haskalah. It endeavored to promote the importance of Torah, that is, traditional Judaism, while professing its commitment to the renewal of the Hebrew language, which it calls ‘the holy tongue.’
In 1823/4, the author and editor Meir Halevi Letteris issued the journal Hatzfirah (Dawn). It was designated by the editor to be “the New Me’asef,” namely, a revival of the journal Hame’asef that ceased publication 12 years earlier. The editor stated his goal: to promote the revival of the Hebrew language and to encourage the youths to become part of this effort by engaging in the study of Hebrew. The importance of this periodical lies in several seminal published articles that exemplify the nature of the Galician Haskalah.

In the early 1840s, two scholars and educators of the German school of the Study of Judaism, Marcus Jost and Michael Creizenach, launched a Hebrew monthly publication in Frankfurt titled Zion (1841–1842) that appeared regularly for two years. The editors were totally committed to cultivate the Hebrew language while promoting their agenda for the renewal and reform of Judaism. While some of the writers in the journal represented a more extreme reform tendencies, there were contributors, such as Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Kalischer, who voiced the orthodox standpoint. Ostensibly, the editors of the journal employed a very liberal editorial policy, opening its pages to diverse points of view regarding Judaism.

In 1842 and 1844, two Vilna Maskilim, teachers at a Hebrew school, Shmuel Yoseph Fünn and Eliezer Lipman Horowitz, published a literary organ of the Lithuanian Haskalah, Pirhei Tzafon (The Northern Flowers). The editors emphasized their moderate Haskalah goals. They professed their loyalty to both Torah and Hochmah (wisdom), proclaiming their literary commitment to integrate the aesthetic with the beneficial, the good with the beautiful. The journal united the Maskilim of Vilna, and created the sense of community among them, strengthening their commitment to Haskalah.

In 1844, Mendel Stern who worked as a proofreader and director of the Hebrew printing department of the famous Schmid's publishing company in Vienna published one issue of Sefer Bikurei Ha’itim (The Book of The First Fruits of the Times). The periodical’s title implied the intention to renew the now demised Bikurei Ha’itim of the 1820s. The editor initiated a new editorial policy, transcribing in German all titles of articles, authors’ names, as well as the editor’s opening article, table of contents, and list of subscribers. It was an attempt to make the new journal more appealing to a wider readership.

A year later, in 1845/6, the Italian Hebrew scholar Yitzhak Shmuel Reggio and Israel Busch issued a one-time periodical titled Bikurei Ha’itim Hahadashim (The New First Fruits of the Times). This periodical, too, was intended by its editors to continue the old journal Bikurei Ha’itim.

To make the journal attractive to more readers, the editors included a practical calendar in German, printed in Hebrew script, which contained historical dates, listings of Jewish and non-Jewish holidays, weather forecasts, and other such practical items that were common to similar calendars.

The editor opened the issue with an article on the history of the Hebrew language and its survival as a non-spoken language, citing its unique role in Jewish heritage. While he admitted that Hebrew had its limitations in philosophical terminology, he argued that it should be used in all studies on Judaic subjects. Hebrew should continue to be cultivated so that future scholars will be trained to study and explore difficult Hebrew texts.

This book is the fourth volume in the series of monographs and annotated indices of Hebrew Haskalah periodicals. It follows the publication of the monographs and annotated indices on Kerem Hemed, titled Kerem Hemed: ‘Hochmat Israel’ [The Scholarly Study of Judaism] As the ‘New Yavneh,’ the Hebrew Journal of the Haskalah in Galicia and Italy (1833–1856), in 2009, and previously on Bikurei Ha’itim, titled Bikurei Ha’itim – Bikurei Hahaskalah [The First Fruits of Haskalah], the Hebrew Journal of the Haskalah in Galicia (in 2005), and the publication of Hame’asef
Index and monograph – *Sha’ar Lahaskalah [The Gate to Haskalah]: An Annotated Index to Hame’asef, the First Hebrew Periodical (1783–1811)*, in 2000, by Magnes Press.

The annotated indices should serve as a reliable reference tool for viewing and reviewing the major topics and issues that occupied the minds of the editors and the writers of these journals. Readers may now examine the scope and the character of the material published in these eight journals in several Haskalah centers in Europe in the first half of the 19th century.

Likewise, it is now convenient to assess the contribution of participating scholars, authors, and poets, to the Haskalah literature, and to explore their ideological stand on various scholarly or Haskalah-related matters which led Judaism and European Jews into the modern era.


**Publisher’s information:** The Hebrew University Magnes Press P.O. Box 39099 Jerusalem 91390, Israel [http://www.magnespress.co.il/](http://www.magnespress.co.il/) or: [http://www.magnes-press.com/](http://www.magnes-press.com/) email: sales@magnespress.co.il

Jacket of Prof. Pelli’s new book, *The Journals of the Haskalah from 1820 to 1845*