Moshe Pelli, one of the major scholars of Hebrew Haskalah (Enlightenment) literature in our time and one of the major contributors to Hebrew culture in America, presents in this book the fruits of his twenty-five years of study of the major genres in this literature. Previously published articles have been rewritten by Pelli for this book.

One tendency of Haskalah literature was to adopt Judaic genres, such as the fable and the religious disputation, which existed in earlier Hebrew literature before the Haskalah and were continued by the Haskalah. Another trend was to use as a model genres that prevailed in European literatures in order to revitalize Hebrew belles lettres. Pelli presents an overview and a detailed discussion of the unique features of each one of these genres in order to present Haskalah as a modern, European-like phenomenon.

Each of the ten chapters of the book is dedicated to one genre—biography, autobiography, utopia, satire, dialogues of the dead, fable, religious disputation, the epistolary story, the imaginary dialogue and the travelogue—though it is clear that several genres may be traced in a single literary work. These genres helped to promote the aims and ideology of the Haskalah and provided new modes of literary expression.

Two works of Isaac Euchel present the genre of biography: his biography of Mendelssohn, published as a book in 1789, and his biography of Isaac Abravanel. Mendelssohn is portrayed as a model of the ideal modern Jew, embodying Haskalah and Judaism. Abravanel, who achieved balance between Judaism and the culture around him, is also presented as an exemplary figure for the Maskilim. The genre of autobiography is represented by Mordechai Aharon Ginzburg's Aviezer, written in the 1820s and published in 1864. Ginzburg employs a variety of literary devices such as parables, epigrams, digressions, anecdotes and didactic allusions in his story, and strives for truth and criticism that will benefit the society.

The genre of utopia attracted the Haskalah writers who wanted to draw a new, ideal type of Jewish society; the utopian genre made it possible for them to portray it as if it actually existed. Euchel's "Igrot Meshulam" and Isaac Satanow's Divre Rivot represents this genre. "Igrot Meshulam" is an epistolary story, satire and utopia. Euchel viewed the limited observance of the Marranos in Spain, the aesthetic aspects of the Catholic worship services, and the progressive life of Italian Jews as utopian models for secular Jewish life and alternatives to traditional Judaism. Satanow's Divre Rivot portrays a utopian society in which the king's reforms of Jewish life change human relations, economy, education, and society; the changes resonate with the Haskalah's ideals.

Pelli meticulously presents the satiric modes of Saul Berlin's 1794 Ktav Yosher, including its structure, figurative language, and secularization of sacred idioms, as well as its use of irony, sarcasm, invective, obscenity, hyperbole, incongruity, reductio ad absurdum, caricature, wit, and humor. Ktav Yosher was written in defense of Naphtali Herz Wessely's treatise on education and displays the degenerating state of the Jewish society. When Pelli analyzes Erter's satire "Gilgul
Nefesh" he also offers a re-evaluation of Erter's literary achievements. In this work
the protagonist undergoes transformations into nine human characters and eight
animals, through which the author relates to the problems of Jewish life.

The **dialogues of the dead** genre was adopted by several *Haskalah* writers
who were attracted to its dramatic debate and search for truth of historical and con-
temporary figures in the afterlife. Pelli analyzes the satiric dialogue of Aaron
Wolfssohn's "Sihah Ba-Eretz Ha-Hayyim," published in 1794, and Tuvyah Feder's
*Qol Mehatzetim*, published in 1853 and 1875. In Wolfssohn's dialogues, the
discussion is between Maimonides, Mendelssohn, and a Polish rabbi. Wolfssohn
presents contemporary topics, especially the controversies between the *Haskalah* and
its opponents. The participants in Feder's dialogue are historical figures and ma-
jor figures of the *Haskalah*, who attack Mendel Lefin's translation of the Book of
Proverbs into Yiddish. The choice of Yiddish rather than German seemed to Fed-
er an act of disloyalty to the *Haskalah*'s dedication to high standards of culture.

The didactic nature of the *fable*, its entertaining aspect, its search for truth,
and its compactness explain why *Haskalah* writers liked this genre. In his 1793 or
1794 *Divre Rivot*, Isaac Satanow adapted the style of *religious disputation* of Ju-
dah Halevi's *Kuzari* and used various literary devices to achieve dramatic tension.
The first *epistolary fiction* writing in modern Hebrew literature is Isaac Euchel's
"Igrot Meshulam," published anonymously in the Hebrew monthly *Hameassef*. It
includes various fictional letters with different opinions but supports the ideas of the
*Haskalah*. Pelli disagrees with the opinion that Euchel's work is a "free trans-
lation" of Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes* and substantiates his view that the au-
thor of "Igrot Meshulam" is Euchel, who followed Montesquieu's use of the epis-
tolary genre but expressed his own personal experience.

The *imaginary dialogue* is illustrated by Baruch Jeitteles' 1800 dialogue be-
tween the year 1800 and the year 1801. The speakers are the two years and they
both attack the mystical Frankist sect. The genre of *travelogue*, which aims both
to teach and to entertain, is represented by Shmuel Romanelli's 1792 *Masa Ba-
Arav*, a travelogue of the author's journey to North Africa. Pelli presents the liter-
ary conventions of the *Haskalah* travelogue and the life of North African Jews from
the *Haskalah* point of view.

While the kinds of genre in *Haskalah* literature are the focal point of Pelli's
book, they are far from being its only subject matter. Pelli presents major authors,
major literary works, major problems, developments and aspirations of the
*Haskalah*, using his immense knowledge of this literature. He passionately and
skillfully advocates and highlights its achievements. His extensive bibliography
(pp. 328–351) is useful. The cultural and literary parameters of his discussion are
expansive. His way of disagreement with other scholars is amiable.

Pelli's erudition and inquisitive mind are evidenced in each chapter. His
analysis is artful. Pelli raises one important question after another and answers
each. For example, of the fable he asks and answers the following: Why was the
fable such a popular genre? What transformation did it undergo? How does the
definition of the fable genre by *Haskalah* fabulists stand in comparison with their
European counterparts? In what ways was the affinity of the *Haskalah*'s fable to
the classical Hebrew fable expressed? How should Haskalah's fables be classified?
Were all the "original fables" original?

In his presentation of the unique attributes of each genre, Pelli applies literary theory, probes the affinity between the Haskalah genre and the European genre, and analyzes the literary qualities and merits and traits of each genre in Haskalah literature vis-à-vis its counterparts on the European scene. This is, in short, a most significant contribution to the research of Haskalah literature.

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Hayyim Nahman Bialik (1873–1934) is widely regarded—especially in Israel—as the national poet of the Jewish people. Bialik's poems express not only his own deeply conflicted emotions but also the ambivalence of a generation of Jews caught between the breakdown of traditional Jewish life and the call of a new Jewish world whose outlines could be but dimly perceived.

While these poems explore a wide range of subjects, almost all of them have the ring of Romanticism. Part of the appeal of Bialik's poems is that they speak the language of the heart rather than the language of the head. If Bialik is to be criticized in this regard, one might say that at times his pathos edges perilously close to bathos.

In their recent translation, Random Harvest: The Novellas of Bialik, David Patterson and Ezra Spicehandler have given the English reader an opportunity to hear Bialik speak in another voice. In the five short stories and one extended legend in this collection (none of them a novella, in my estimation), Bialik keeps a certain intellectual distance from his subject. The balance between head and heart has shifted from what we find in his poetry; in these prose pieces we have more head and less heart. In his prose voice, Bialik reveals a capacity for satire, humor, and a wry playfulness that is much less evident in his poetry.

This difference in voice is least apparent in the opening selection, Random Harvest (Safiach), an incomplete work of autobiographical fiction written in stages between 1908 and 1923, when—oddly enough—Bialik completed Chapter 1. Much of this piece echoes his poetry. Already in the second paragraph one encounters imagery reminiscent of his poem Levadi ("By Myself"):

Like a forsaken fledgling, I wandered alone about my nest; my father and mother left me to myself and there was no one else to look after me. Then God in His mercy took me under the shelter of His wings . . . (p. 22).