The departure of a righteous person from their city leaves an impression. As long as a righteous person is in their city, they are its glory and splendour and beauty; when they leave it, its glory, its splendour and its beauty are also gone.

Rashi on Genesis 28:10

This book is dedicated to the memory of our friend
Zuzia Krzemień (1987–2021)

Contents

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A Note from the Editors

This book developed out of a doctoral dissertation written by Zuzanna Krzemień under the supervision of François Guesnet and Ada Rapoport-Albert at the Department of Hebrew and Jewish Studies of University College London. It is the result of her long-standing passion for Jewish history and languages.

Tragically, she passed away in early 2021 and did not get to see her book in print. As a homage to our sorely missed friend and her scholarship, we prepared her dissertation for publication to the best of our abilities while remaining faithful to her original work. We hope her innovative research about Solomon Dubno will serve historians and scholars of literature and religion in their explorations of the complicated fabric of the Haskalah movement.

Zuzia—as her friends and colleagues called her—was a dear friend and a beloved member of the close-knit community of the Hebrew and Jewish Studies Department at University College London, which she joined after doing her European Voluntary Service at the Roma Support Group in London. Zuzia was always up for all sorts of activities: academic events, visits to museum exhibitions, Hebrew and Russian reading groups, coffee dates, birthday celebrations, and other parties. She was shy and modest despite her impressive achievements. Every conversation with her was, however, the opposite of small talk. Zuzia loved asking about other people's experiences and generously shared impressions and advice about all the places she had lived.

We would like to thank Zuzia's parents, Grażyna and Zdzisław Krzemień, who generously supported this publication. We are grateful to Antony Polonsky and Alessandra Anzani at Academic Studies Press for taking this project on board and to Andrea Schatz and Irene Zwiep, the examiners of Zuzia's dissertation, for supporting our endeavor. Finally, we thank Avigail Oren, who masterfully edited the book's introduction.

In her original acknowledgements, Zuzia expressed her gratitude to her supervisors François Guesnet and Ada Rapoport-Albert. She also thanked David Biale, Shmuel Feiner, David Kamenetsky, and Shaul Stampfer for their suggestions and comments on her work, as well as Ela Szubarczyk, Monika Biesaga, Robert Żydowicz, and her parents, for their support, love, and understanding.

Zuzia's original research was made possible thanks to the support of several institutions: the Arts and Humanities Research Council, the Posen Foundation, and the Royal Historical Society. We would like to acknowledge the staff of the British Library's Asian and African Studies Department, the Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana in Amsterdam, the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, and the Library of Congress, all of whom assisted Zuzia in her research.

The portrait of Solomon Dubno that features on the book cover is courtesy of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam.

Monika Biesaga, Noëmie Duhaut, and Wojciech Tworek

January 2023

Preface: Zuzanna Krzemień at University College London

Zuzanna Krzemień came to the Department of Hebrew and Jewish Studies at University College London with the wish to pursue a research degree. An accomplished Hebraist, she had a range of ideas. Together, we developed the project to explore the much understudied life and works of Solomon Dubno (1738–1813), a learned White Russian Jew, Talmudist and grammarian, and his impact on the German Jewish Enlightenment. Ada Rapoport-Albert, a world-leading expert in Jewish religious thought and movements in Eastern Europe, quickly agreed to join the supervision team. Our application for funding from the London Arts and Humanities Partnership (LAHP) was successful—the first in a series of prestigious scholarships Zuzanna would be awarded during her doctoral studies. Most noteworthy were a funded internship at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in New York City and a fellowship from the Posen Foundation (Jerusalem), which secured the completion of her research. Key to these successes was the steady progress of her project, as well as the wealth and significance of her findings.

Much of Zuzanna's research focused on the reassessment of the cooperation between Solomon Dubno and Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786), the central figure of the German Jewish Enlightenment of the late eighteenth century. As Zuzanna was able to demonstrate, much of Mendelssohn's initiative to translate the Hebrew bible into German and to draft a new commentary (or *Biur*) on it depended on the erudition and linguistic skills of Dubno. Zuzanna was also able to show the parting of ways between these two thinkers: whereas Mendelssohn considered their undertaking a cornerstone of his broader argument about the compatibility of Jewish observance with partaking in the wider society and did not stand in the way of a rapprochement between Jews and non-Jews, Dubno's focus was on a renewed engagement and deeper understanding—also in the literal meaning of the word—of the Jewish religious tradition. Zuzanna provides the first comprehensive account of the estrangement between Dubno and Mendelssohn which would eventually lead to

a court case. She also demonstrates that Dubno's attempt to produce his own commentary—a project that in the end did not materialize—gained substantially more subscribers across Central and Eastern Europe than Mendelssohn's. Zuzanna outlined the intellectual and spiritual profile of Dubno based on a list itemizing the entire book collection of her protagonist, revealing a reluctant enlightener engaging with a wide spectrum of Jewish religious thought of his day, and much less interested in the developments of contemporary philosophy. A core concern of Dubno was a perceived lack of expertise in Hebrew among his fellow Jews. Dubno's literary writings, another focus of Zuzanna's study, reflected this hope that poetry might convince his contemporaries of the inherent beauty of the language of the Bible.

Zuzanna was awarded her PhD in the spring of 2019 after her doctoral thesis was examined by two leading experts on the history of Hebrew and of the Jewish Enlightenment in the eighteenth century, Professor Irene Zwiep (University of Amsterdam) and Dr Andrea Schatz (King's College London). She wrote two chapters summarizing her findings for collected volumes on Jews in Eastern Europe.[1]

Zuzanna also worked as an editorial assistant for a research project on the history of the Jewish self-government in the Polish lands for several years, and her contribution is gratefully acknowledged. When she asked me to write on behalf of her application to the position of cataloger for East European languages at the British Library, I was persuaded that a career at this prestigious institution would correspond in so many ways to her inclinations: she had remarkable linguistic skills (let's not forget—she wrote the whole thesis not in her mother tongue, but in English, with mostly Hebrew primary sources), her academic work was of impeccable academic precision, and she was immensely curious. Her passion for travelling, instilled by her caring parents Grażyna and Zdzisław Krzemień, was an expression of this eagerness to engage with the new and the unknown. All this made her an ideal candidate for a position at the library, one of the most remarkable repositories of human knowledge. Later, she was promoted to the

1 Zuzanna Krzemień, "Solomon Dubno, His Eastern European Scholarship, and the German Haskalah," in *Jews and Germans in Eastern Europe: Shared and Comparative Histories*, ed. Tobias Grill, 46–60 (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2018); Zuzanna Krzemień, "Solomon Dubno: an Eastern European Maskil and the German Haskalah," in *Jews in Polish and German Lands: Encounters, Interactions, Inspirations, Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry* 37 (Liverpool: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization/Liverpool University Press, forthcoming in 2025).

position of curator of East European collections. I was so glad to hear from her colleagues how much they valued her as a colleague and as a friend.

It is incredibly sad that this exceptionally talented, promising, and committed young scholar left us prematurely, and our many questions will probably never be answered. I speak on behalf of the Department of Hebrew and Jewish Studies when I express my deep gratitude to Monika Biesaga, Noëmie Duhaut, and Wojciech Tworek, fellow students, friends of Zuzanna, and academics as dedicated to their vocation as Zuzanna was, for preparing her thesis for publication. We will honor her memory, celebrate her contribution to scholarship, and, most importantly, value the time spent together.

François Guesnet, University College London

January 2023

A Note on the Presentation of Source Materials

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

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

Published English translations were used wherever possible. All other translations of the sources were done by the author.

Introduction

Eastern European participation in the Jewish Enlightenment: the lessons of one life

Solomon ben Yoel Dubno (1738–1813) was an Eastern European maskil, a Jewish scholar representative of the early Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment) movement who cultivated both religious learning and knowledge of sciences.[1] In comparison to other Eastern European Jews who moved to Western Europe and participated in maskilic activity, Dubno deserves special attention because of the insight his life and work gives into the nuances of the Jewish Enlightenment. Dubno, a religious Jew from Eastern Europe with a more religiously traditional worldview than the one advocated by the more well-known and well-studied Berlin maskilim, was also a member of the early Haskalah. His life and scholarship demonstrate that the early Jewish Enlightenment was not static and uniform in its ideology, nor limited to a few locations; rather, the Haskalah was a multifarious phenomenon of the Jewish Diaspora in Europe and included individuals with heterogenous views.[2]

In its early stages, the Haskalah did not constitute an organized movement, though its diverse participants—self-taught scholars, university-educated doctors, and rabbis—broadly aimed to invigorate the use of the Hebrew language, spread knowledge of the natural sciences among the Jewish population, and improve the social status of its members in non-Jewish society.[3] Those who followed

1 Note that the term "science" was not in use until the 1830s. In Dubno's lifetime, it was referred to as "natural philosophy" or labeled under "foreign branches of knowledge" (*ḥokhmot ḥitsoniyot*). Sydney Ross, "Scientist: The Story of a Word," *Annals of Science* 18, no. 2 (1962): 65–85.

2 Andrea Schatz, "'Peoples Pure of Speech': The Religious, the Secular, and Jewish Beginning of Modernity," *Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook* 6 (2007): 169–87.

3 Moshe Pelli, *Haskalah and Beyond: The Reception of the Hebrew Enlightenment and the Emergence of Haskalah Judaism* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2010), 9–10.

the Jewish Enlightenment principles exhibited different levels of involvement in literary and social activities, as well as various degrees of attachment to the traditional Jewish lifestyle.[4] Many of its followers, such as Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786), Isaac Satanow (1733–1805), and Solomon Dubno, combined Enlightenment values with religious observance.

The multitude of maskilic attitudes is particularly visible through Dubno's collaboration with Moses Mendelssohn on *Sefer netivot ha-shalom* [The Paths of Peace], a Bible translation and commentary, commonly referred to as the *Biur* [Explanation]. Both Mendelssohn and Dubno sought to popularize the study of Hebrew and the Hebrew Bible, despite their very different backgrounds, interests, and education. Connected by a shared textual tradition and a commitment to increasing Hebrew literacy and knowledge of the Hebrew Bible among the Jewish population, they embarked on a joint undertaking to publish the German Pentateuch translation with a commentary.

Gradually, their attempts at collaboration revealed that they espoused two different maskilic visions. Analyzing the conflict that emerged between Dubno and Mendelssohn during their work on the *Biur* sheds light on the early Haskalah as a plurivocal endeavor, in which various, often contradictory visions intertwined and, at times, clashed. While Dubno, like most of the early maskilim, wished to retain a moderate approach that would not undermine the existing order, Mendelssohn was ready to adopt a more radical stance, even if that meant coming into conflict with more conservative rabbis. Mendelssohn's unwillingness to compromise on his idea to teach the Pentateuch by means of a sophisticated translation into High German was a step into modernity, which Dubno did not want to take.[5]

When Mendelssohn published the first volume of the *Biur* and faced the criticism of prominent German rabbis such as Pinhas ha-Levi Horowitz of Frankfurt and Raphael Cohen, Dubno set off for a journey throughout Eastern Europe in search of support for his own Pentateuch edition, which would include a commentary and grammatical clarification without any translation into

4 David Sorkin, *The Berlin Haskalah and German Religious Thought: Orphans of Knowledge* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2000), 62.

5 In this study, the term "modernity" is defined as a period in history characterized by the emergence of such phenomena as the public sphere and expansion of knowledge and its growing accessibility to the public. Schatz, "Peoples Pure of Speech," 171–72.

a modern language. In this way, and in contrast to Mendelssohn, he would forever remain a follower of the early Haskalah.

Despite this work on one the most important projects of the German Jewish Enlightenment, historians of the Haskalah have almost entirely overlooked Dubno. Many of his poems, essays, and letters remain unpublished, but Dubno, an Eastern European religious Jew, was an integral part of the eighteenth-century Jewish Enlightenment and his biography reveals important variations in maskilic activity and philosophy.

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

Solomon Dubno was born in 1738 in the town of Dubno, Volhynia (in today's Western Ukraine), which became an important center of Jewish life in Eastern Europe in the sixteenth century. The thriving Jewish communities of Volhynia met a tragic fate a century later, during the pogroms associated with the Chmielnicki Uprising, when their population decreased from sixteen thousand to eight thousand.[6] Their numbers rapidly rose again. According to the 1765 census, there were 51,736 Jewish inhabitants in 116 settlements throughout Volhynia.[7] Dubno's Jewish population alone was 170 households, which represented a remarkable recovery from the low point of forty-seven households in 1650, after the Chmielnicki Uprising in 1648. Before the pogroms, the population had been about 350 people living in fifty-eight households.[8] Eighteenth-century wars, revolts by the Haidamacks, and blood libels, accompanied by pogroms directed

6 Shaul Stampfer, "What Actually Happened to the Jews of Ukraine in 1648?," *Jewish History* 17, no. 2 (2003): 214–18.

7 "Ukraina. Evrei na teritorii Ukrainy do kontsa 18 veka," in *Kratkaia evreiskaia entsiklopediia*, ed. Ella Slivkina (Jerusalem: Obshchestvo po issledovaniiu evreiskikh obshchin, 1976–2005), 8:1170–87.

8 Ignacy Radliński, "Dubno," in *Słownik geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego i innych krajów słowiańskich*, ed. Filip Sulimierski, Bronisław Chlebowski, and Władysław Walewski (Warszawa: Filip Sulimierski; Władysław Walewski, 1881), 2:194–97; Benyamin Lukin, "Dubno," in *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, ed. Gershon Hundert (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 1:432; "Dubno," in *Kratkaia evreiskaia entsiklopedia*, 2:385–86; Shmuel Ettinger, "Volhynia," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, ed. Fred Skolnik (Detroit: Thomson/Gale, 2007), 20:570–73. To learn more about the pogroms in Dubno during the Chmielnicki Uprising, see Moshe Rosman, "Dubno in the Wake of Khmel'nyts'kyi," *Jewish History* 17, no. 2 (2003): 239–55.

at the local Jewry, did not hinder the growth of the Jewish population of Volhynia. By 1838, there were about 195,000 Jews in Volhynia, who constituted 6.7% of the total population of the region.[9] At the end of the eighteenth century, Dubno became the largest Jewish settlement in Volhynia, known among Jews as *Dubno rabati* (the great Dubno); a name which reveals its significance for the local Jewish community.[10]

Very little is known of Solomon Dubno's personal life. He married the daughter of Simha ben Joshua Haas of Złoczów (1711–1768), the author of two books of moral instruction couched in kabbalistic terms.[11] He had one son, Abraham Moses, and it is unknown whether Dubno had any other children.[12] He pursued his rabbinic education in Dubno under the tutelage of Naphtali Herz (d. 1777), who was a traditionalist and religiously conservative.[13] It is also possible that, at an uncertain location, Dubno studied under Solomon Chelm (1717–1781), renowned for his support for the study of philosophy, mathematics and science.[14]

9 See ibid., and Oleksandr Haiman, *Istoria evreiv Ukraini* (Kiev: Akademia Istorii ta kulturi everiv Ukraini im. Shimona Dubnova, 2003), 465.

10 Lukin, "Dubno," 1:432.

11 These books were *Lev simḥah* (Żółkiew, 1757) and *Neti'ah shel simḥah* (Żółkiew, 1763), as well as an account of his journey to the Holy Land *Ahavat Tsiyon* (Grodno, 1790); see Gershom Scholem, *Ha-shalav ha-aḥaron: meḥkere ha-ḥasidut shel Gershom Shalom*, ed. David Assaf and Esther Liebes (Jerusalem: Am Oved Publishers, Magnes, 2008), 177.

12 "Literatur-Berichte," *Literaturblatt des Orients: Berichte, Studien und Kritiken für jüdische Geschichte und Literatur* 8, no. 12 (1847): 178–79; *GSJ*, 19:258–61, letter no. 237.

13 Benjamin Hirsch Auerbach, *Geschichte der israelitischen Gemeinde Halberstadt* (Halberstadt: Meyer, 1866), 179.

14 It is uncertain where and at what time Dubno was Chelm's disciple, if at all. While no evidence of it has been preserved, Dubno indeed knew Chelm personally and published his *Sha'are ne'imah*. Some scholars claim, without giving any references, that Dubno was Chelm's pupil in Lviv. See Alexander Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn: A Biographical Study* (London: Littman Library of Jewish Civilisation, 1998), 354; Jacob S. Levinger, "Dubno, Solomon ben Joel," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 6:34. Scholem confirms that Dubno was Chelm's disciple in Lviv around the years 1759/60–1764/65. See Scholem, *Ha-shalav ha-aḥaron*, 177. However, according to others, Solomon Chelm gained his first rabbinic position in Chelm, then moved on to Zamość in 1767, and came to Lviv only in 1771. See Itzhak Alfassi, "Chełm, Solomon ben Moses," *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 4:589; Rehav Rubin, "Hug ha-'areş by Rabbi Solomon of Chelm: An Early Geographical Treatise and Its Sources," *Aleph* 8 (2008): 135–36. This would mean that Dubno could not have been his student in Lviv at that time, as he published Chelm's *Sha'are ne'imah* in Frankfurt an der Oder in 1766 and moved to Amsterdam in 1767. Dubno might have studied under Solomon Chelm in Chełm, and it is not certain who was his teacher in Lviv—if he studied there at all.

Whether Dubno was ever Chelm's student or not, Chelm's writing inspired Dubno to depart for Western Europe sometime in the 1760s. Dubno was engaged in "the holy handicraft" of book production for most of his life.[15] In search of a publisher for Chelm's *Sha'are ne'imah* [Gates of Melody]—a work on accentuation in the books of Job, Proverbs, and Psalms, and the rules guiding the transformation of disjunctive accents into conjunctive ones—Dubno traveled extensively.[16] Finally, he arrived in Frankfurt an der Oder, an important trade center thanks to the annual fair held there. In Frankfurt, the local rabbi, Gershon, provided him with his haskamah (approbation)—which emphasized the importance of the publication, as it explained the forgotten rules of cantillation, or ritual chanting of passages from the Torah. In his preface to the book, Chelm said that he composed it in his youth, but after Dubno read it and expressed his regret that it remained unknown, Dubno convinced him to have it published. Dubno helped Chelm reorganize and edit the material, and only then was given permission to print it, which Dubno did twice: in Frankfurt an der Oder in 1766 and in Frankfurt am Main in 1776.

In addition to *Sha'are ne'imah*, Dubno published several writings, copied volumes by hand, and worked as a bookseller in Amsterdam, where he settled in 1767.[17] One explanation for his decision to move to the Dutch Republic and not to another location in the West might have been his acquaintance with the rabbi of Amsterdam, Saul Lowenstam (1717–1790), who he first met when Lowenstam had been rabbi of Dubno. Since Dubno's profession as a bookseller and teacher from Eastern Europe put him in a financially unstable position, the potential support of a local rabbi might have encouraged him to travel to Amsterdam. Furthermore, the city was the most important publishing center of Hebrew literature at that time and could, therefore, offer Dubno more opportunities as a scholar, publisher, and bookseller than any other European city.[18]

15 Lajb Fuks and Renate G. Fuks-Mansfeld, *Hebrew Typography in the Northern Netherlands 1585–1815* (Leiden: Brill, 1987), 1:6.

16 See Auerbach, *Geschichte der israelitischen Gemeinde Halberstadt*, 179; Zvi Betzer, "Accents and Masora in Rabbinic Responsa," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 91, no. 1/2 (2000): 2.

17 Israel Bartal, *The Jews of Eastern Europe 1772–1881* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 94; Altmann, *Mendelssohn*, 354. This work might have involved regular business travel between Eastern and Western Europe; see Samuel b. Azriel Mulder, *Reshit meḥkar peli'ah ve-tuhah*, c. 1820, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana, HS. ROS. 337, 21b–23a.

18 Leib Fuks, "Amsterdam: Hebrew Printing," *European Judaism: A Journal for the New Europe* 5, no. 2 (1971): 17.

Having spent five years in Amsterdam, in 1772 Dubno moved to Berlin, where he was an active scholar and publisher for ten years.[19] While the reason for his decision to move to the Prussian capital is unknown, one might suspect that he was attracted by the city's reputation as the center of Enlightenment scholars and proponents of rationalism. In fact, a significant proportion of the Berlin maskilim were of Eastern European origins.[20] A record of Dubno's sources of income between 1774 and 1778 shows that he supported himself by teaching, reading the Torah in synagogue on Sabbath, selling books and lottery tickets, as well as by taking on occasional jobs such as writing custom-made poems.[21] Among his pupils were the sons of Moses Mendelssohn, Zvi Hirsch Levin, the rabbi of Berlin, and Daniel Itzig-Jaffe, one of Berlin's wealthiest Jews.

In 1783, following a year-long sojourn in Eastern Europe, Dubno returned to Amsterdam, where he remained until his death on June 23, 1813.[22] The epitaph on Dubno's tombstone at the Muiderberg cemetery acknowledges his achievements as a scholar and poet:

> Here is the bed of Solomon. Here rests a righteous and God-fearing man. He is well known as one of the heroes whose wisdom will be sung about. Out of the storehouse of his books his springs will spread to every corner. He, by means of his excellent commentary, restored the crown [of the Pentateuch] to its past glory.[23]

This study attempts to determine what Dubno's role was in publishing the *Biur* and shaping the maskilic movement, and answer questions such as: What can

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

20 Steven M. Lowenstein, *The Berlin Jewish Community: Enlightenment, Family, and Crisis, 1770–1830* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 34; Olga Litvak, *Haskalah: The Romantic Movement in Judaism* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2012), 24–46.

21 A register of Dubno's revenue was sold at auction in 1990. David Kamenetsky gives a summary of its contents in "Haskamot gedole ha-rabanim le-ḥumashim shel rabi Shlomo Dubno" [part 1], *Yeshurun* 8 (2001): 724n17.

22 Eliakim Carmoly, "Solomon Dubno," *Revue orientale* 3 (Brussels, 1844): 312.

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

his conflict with Mendelssohn teach us about the nature of the early Haskalah as a plurivocal phenomenon? How can Dubno's intellectual profile and output be described in the context of the Jewish Enlightenment? Considering his Eastern European origin and education, and the fact that he spent most of his life in Berlin and Amsterdam, where exactly does he belong on the geographical and intellectual map of eighteenth-century Jewish scholarship? What was original about his work, and did it have any influence on other authors and thinkers?

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

The Haskalah developed in the eighteenth century in numerous locations in both Eastern and Western Europe. The term "Jewish Enlightenment" can be misleading, and one should be cautious not to perceive the goals of the Haskalah as synonymous with the principles of the Enlightenment, a philosophical movement that dominated European intellectual circles in the eighteenth century.[24] Even the meaning of the name *Haskalah* does not exactly correspond to its non-Jewish counterparts such as *Enlightenment*, *Aufklärung*, and *Lumières*, as it derives from the word *sekhel* (reason), and the verb *lehaskil*, which was used in medieval times to denote the process of learning and has no connotation of light.[25] Nevertheless, the Haskalah shared many ideas with the Enlightenment, and both of these movements advocated, to some extent, the ideas of rationalism, tolerance, liberty, secularism, and scientific inquiry. The desire to learn was not just conceived of as a means of self-improvement; learning also had a wider social dimension, as it had the potential to benefit both society and the human condition.[26]

The origin of the Enlightenment in general, and of the Haskalah in particular, has become a source of major scholarly debate. Some scholars trace the first signs of the Haskalah back to seventeenth-century court Jews, such as Samuel Oppenheimer (1630–1703), Moses Benjamin Wulff (1661–1729), and Moses Levin Gomperz (c. 1686–1762). These men, thanks to their privileged

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

25 Andrea Schatz, *Sprache in der Zerstreuung: Die Säkularisierung des Hebräischen im 18. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), 281n2.

26 Dorinda Outram, *The Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 1–9.

position as influential merchants and entrepreneurs, functioned in the realms of both the Christian and the Jewish world and were inclined to adopt elements of non-Jewish culture. A century later, the character of the financial Jewish elite was marked by an accelerated process of acculturation. Rich men would provide their children with an increasingly secular education encompassing modern languages and general subjects, which would enable them to succeed in non-Jewish high society.[27] Moreover, many of them undertook philanthropic projects to improve the living conditions and education of the Jewish population, while also financially supporting Jewish scholars and authors who popularized the ideas of the Enlightenment.

While early scholarship argued that the Enlightenment constituted a singular, uniform, transnational movement whose greatest achievement was the emergence of a secular intelligentsia that questioned religious authority,[28] in the 1980s, scholars began to emphasize regional differences and the contribution of local culture to the predominant philosophy espoused by different intellectuals.[29] This trend has extended to research on the Haskalah, with scholars underscoring that the Jewish Enlightenment was a complex phenomenon whose characteristics changed with time and location.[30] However, there has been a trend to attribute

27 Murray Jay Rosman, *The Lords' Jews: Magnate-Jewish Relations in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth during the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press for the Center for Jewish Studies, Harvard University and the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 1990); Selma Stern-Taeubler, "The First Generation of Emancipated Jews," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 15, no. 1 (1970): 3–9; Selma Stern-Taeubler, *The Court Jew: A Contribution to the History of the Period of Absolutism in Central Europe* (Philadelphia: The Jewish publication Society of America, 1950); Francis Ludwig Carsten, "The Court Jews: A Prelude to Emancipation," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 3, no. 1 (1958): 140–56.

28 Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1967), 1:xi–xiii, 3–8; Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1951); Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 191–213; John Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment: Scotland and Naples, 1680–1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

29 Roy Porter and Mikulas Teich, eds., *The Enlightenment in National Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

30 Dauber, *Antonio's Devils*, 27–29, 39–40. Dauber's approach was criticized by Jonathan Israel, who believes that the Enlightenment constituted one intellectual movement, but divides it into the "Radical Enlightenment" and a subsequent "High Enlightenment." This simplifying approach carries the risk of ignoring the diversity of opinions expressed by the followers of the Enlightenment and, consequently, might result in too schematic a depiction of the phenomenon. Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650–1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Jonathan Israel, "Enlightenment!