



Joseph Perl's Revealer Of Secrets: The First Hebrew Novel (Modern Hebrew Classics)

Dov Taylor

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The dawning of the nineteenth century found the Jews of Eastern Europe torn between the forces of progress and reaction as they took their first tentative steps toward the modern world. In a war of words and of books, Haskala—the Jewish Enlightenment—did battle with the religious revival movement known as Hasidism. Perl, an ardent advocate of Enlightenment, unleashed the opening salvo with the publication in 1819 of *Revealer of Secrets*. The novel tried to pass itself off as a hasidic holy book when it was, in fact, a broadside against Hasidism—a parody of its teachings and of the language of its holy books. The outraged *hasidim* responded by buying up and burning as many copies as they could. Dov Taylor's careful translation and commentary make this classic of Hebrew literature available and accessible to the contemporary English-speaking reader while preserving the integrity and bite of Perl's original. With Hasidism presently enjoying a remarkable rebirth, the issues in *Revealer of Secrets* are all the more relevant to those seeking to balance reason and faith. As the first Hebrew novel, the work will also be of great interest to students of modern Hebrew literature and modern Jewish history.

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