

## ‘Stand–still’ or Innovation?

### 0. AIM OF THIS PAPER

*In the history of Hebrew linguistics*, the period after the Qimḥis until the beginning of the sixteenth century has been called ‘The Stand–still’ [Barr & Tenne 1972: 1359]. In this period many grammatical works were composed which are hardly discussed in detail by historiographers of Hebrew linguistics, but of which further study might show the qualification ‘Stand–still’ to be incorrect.

In this paper, I will treat some grammars from the fifteenth century of Jewish Hebrew linguistics and I will investigate what its special features are. Then, I shall discuss the grammar of Abraham ben Meir de Balmes which marks the transition of Hebrew linguistic scholarship from Jews to Christians around 1500.

Furthermore, I shall indicate the connexions of these grammars with Antiquity and show their new orientation on Aristotle’s scientific principles, which they have in common with grammars of the Western tradition.

### 1. THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

Although the grammars of the Qimḥis have been very popular, there appears to emerge criticism of the Qimḥis, especially in the grammar of the exegete, Averroist and Aristotelian philosopher and linguist Joseph ibn Abbâ Mâri Kaspi (France,

1297–1340) who also advocated the application of logic to grammar [Bacher 1972: 215–216; Hirschfeld 1926: 94; Husik 1976: 329]. This criticism of the Qimḥis by Jewish grammarians continues in the ages to come.

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the period of great linguistic discoveries is over but Hebrew grammarians display a great concern with the theoretical foundations of their art. This is a new trend in Hebrew linguistics, and, yet, the period of Hebrew linguistic activity is qualified as ‘the period of stand–still’.

One grammar of this so–called ‘period of stand–still’ has drawn scholarly attention, to wit, *Ma’aseh Efod* written in 1403 by Isaac ben Moses, also known as Profiat Durán, or, after his grammar, Efodi. The grammar has been widely used in the following centuries, by Jews and Christians alike.

### 1.1. *Profiat Durán’s* משה דורן

Isaac ben Moses was of Catalan birth (Perpiña = Fr. Perpignan) but the exact dates of his birth and death are unknown. It is assumed that he passed away around 1414. An interesting biographical fact is that the author had been subject to compulsory baptism in 1391 and that he later returned to Judaism of which he became an apologist.

Documents discovered in the archives of Perpignan (shortly before 1971) show «that he lived there as a Christian under the name of Honoratus de Bonafide for about 12 years after 1391/92, serving as an astrologer to Juan I of Aragon», but still continuing his Hebrew literary activity [*EJ* 6: 299–301; Friedländer & Kohn 1865, Einl.: 3–4].

I think it was after his official return to Judaism that he adopted the Catalan name which reflects his perseverance: Profiat Durán, ‘the tough sticker’, *profiat* being the past participle from Catalan *profiar* (= Castilian *porfiar*), ‘to persist’, and *Durán*, a common Catalan surname, related to *duro*, ‘tough’, ‘hard’.

Except for being an agile grammarian, Profiat Durán was well–versed in various fields of learning:

Als herrliche Denkmäler seines viel umfassenden Geistes stehen dessen Schriften da, welche fast alle Zweigen der damaligen Wissenschaften, wie Bibel- und Sprachkunde, Philosophie, Astronomie, Geschichte, Medizin umfassen.

(Friedländer & Kohn 1865, Einl.: 4–5).

His application of philosophy to grammatical practice appears clearly from his *Ma'aseh Efod* which shows the influence of Aristotelism. Friedländer and Kohn [1865, Einl.: 16–17] mention as authorities referred to by the author: the *Targum* by Onqelos, and the Bible commentators Rashi, Nachmanides and Ibn Ezra, as well as the grammatical works by the latter. Grammarians dealt with in the *Ma'aseh Efod* are, in the first place David Qimḥi's *Mikhlol* whose opinions he in many respects opposes preferring those of the 'old grammarians', in particular of Yehudah Ḥayyūḡ (c. 1000) and Abulwalīd Marwān ibn Ḡanāḥ (begin 11<sup>th</sup> cent.)—be it not without criticism. The Gaon Sa'adyah ben Joseph al-Fayyūmī (892–942), Menahem ibn Saruq (ca. 915–after 960), Dunās ibn Labraṭ (c. 925–c. 990), Abraham ibn Ezra (1092–1167) and others are mentioned too. As philosophical authorities Aristotle and Averroes are mentioned. Further is referred to Maimonides's works *Moreh Nebukhim* and his treatise on logic, Solomon ben Yehudah ibn Gabirol (1020/21–1089/70), Yiṣḥaq ben Ya'aqov Alfasi (1013–1103) and Yehudah ha-Levi's *Kuzari*. Profiat Durán appears to share the opinion of the last-mentioned author in respect to the degeneration of Hebrew [Friedländer & Kohn 1865: 39–40, cf. Hirschfeld 1926: 95–96]. Bacher had indicated, too, that Profiat Durán's grammar is founded on philosophical principles:

Die ersten fünf Capitel sind allgemeinen Begriffsbestimmungen und Erläuterungen gewidmet, die am hervorstehendsten die gekennzeichnete Richtung des Werkes erkennen lassen. Sie haben die Sprache an sich zum Gegenstande, und besprechen nach dem beliebten Schema der aristotelischen Philosophie die Gründe der Sprache nach Stoff, Form, Zweck und Urheber, ferner ihre Theile (die drei Redetheile) und ihre Elemente (Laute, Buchstaben).

(Bacher 1974: 217–218).

Chapter 6 treats of the letters and their phonetic classification according to the organs of speech. The general part is concluded by two chapters on grammatical 'science'.

After this general part, the noun and its classification is discussed (chapter 9), followed by the chapters (10–23) on the verb which also includes the treatment of the servile letters. These are followed by a chapter on nominal formations and one on the discovery of the root. In the concluding chapters is dealt with object suffixes, interpretation of the Scriptures and the third word class, the particles.

Profiat Durán is one of the few grammarians who deal extensively with ‘phonetics’ of Hebrew: the grammar is concluded by two chapters on the speech sounds, which are of importance for the history of the pronunciations of Hebrew too [cf. Bacher 1974: 217–218; Hirschfeld 1926: 95–96; Barr & Tenne 1972: 1373–1374].

A feature of this grammar which distinguishes it from earlier Hebrew grammars, is constituted by its use of formal definitions. The first chapter begins with the definition of language in general:

הלשון הוא נקבץ כל אחרי הקולות האנושים לבד המורה בהסבמה אל עם ועם אל העניינים הנמצאים

[Friedländer & Kohn 1865: 27] <sup>1</sup>.

Language is the total of all units of human sounds only, signifying by convention of every single nation the existing things.

As the author assures us, the use of definitions finds its origin in logic, which in Profiat Durán’s age is founded on Aristotle’s works such as the *Posterior Analytics* and the *Topica*, although certain elements occur in other works of the Philosopher also—for instance, those concerning theory of science (cf. e.g., *Physics* I, cap.1; *Posterior Analytics* I, cap.1–2).

The Aristotelian basis of Durán’s grammar appears, among others, from the description of ‘the science of language’ which, as any science, should be founded on ‘first principles’. The author, however, indicates that he uses the term ‘science’ as a more general term than the philosophers:

<sup>1</sup> Quotations are diplomatic. In Latin texts the long *s* is replaced by *s* and abbreviations are solved, which is indicated by *italics*.

חכמת הלשון היא חכמה כוללת הדקדוק והמליצה והשיר לכן ראוי שינתן גדרה באופן מסכים לשלשם ואחד יובדל כל אחד בהבדלו המיוחד. ואומר כי חכמת הלשון היא חכמה תוריע דרכים כוללים ידבר בהם בלשון כפי הראוי לפי הסכמת הלשון ההוא. ורצוני באמרי כפי יראוי שיורה הדבור מסבים כפי ההנחות הלשוניות למה שיצויר בנפש. ואמרי לחכמת הלשון חכמה אמנם הוא בהיות שם חכמה יותר כולל ממה שיסברו אותו הפילוסופים וזה שהם כבר גדרו החכמה בשווא קנין שיושג אל הנפש בהתחלות האמתיות ההתחלות הידועות אם במעב השכל במשכלות הראשונות או בחוש או בנסיגן. ולפי זה לא יהיה חכמת הלשון חכמה כלל כי ההתחלות הסמויות בלתי ידועות באחד מהדרכים הנזכרים אבל כבר היה שם חכמה יותר כן אצלו וחזא שאנחנו כבר נקרא חכמה לכל מה שיודע בחקירה או בהקש או ראייה מכא איזה שרשים והתחלות עם [קיא] אמתות שהנחנו והוסכמו. וכבר קרא הרב לחכמות האלה חכמות מוסכמות. ולפי זה יהיה חכמת הלשון חכמה ויצדק עליה גדר החכמה וזה שכבר יודעו בה בחקירה והתחלות המונחות בה.

[Friedländer & Kohn 1865: 42].

The science of language is the totality of the science of grammar, rhetoric and poetics, therefore, it is seemly that its definition shall be given with respect to these three in the proper way, and afterwards each of these shall be distinguished in its further division. And I say that science of language is the science that makes known all the manners of speech of the language, as it is seemly according to the convention of the language at issue. Namely, when I say 'as it is seemly', it means 'conventional speech' according to the hypotheses of language, expressing which is impressed in the soul. And when I say that 'the science of language' is truly a science then I apply 'science' essentially as a term more general than the philosophers understand by it, and science has earlier been commonly defined as the faculty which shall be obtained by the soul through true principles and causes, namely, through true first principles of certainty or through the nature of understanding through axioms, or through sense or experience. And according to this, science of language is no science at all because its principles of convention are without certainties in one of the manners referred to, but the term 'science' is more generally used by us and we may give the name science to all that is cognizable by examination and by analogy or evidence by some virtue of basic elements and principles which are true or were established and agreed upon. And the rabbi of the sciences [i.e. Maimonides] has called the latter 'conventional sciences'. And according to this, the science of language is a science for the definition of science is applicable to it, and this is that knowledge of language is ready to be gathered by research and evidence of concrete data by virtue of basic elements and established principles.

Durán's concern with scientific theory is an innovative element in Hebrew grammar. And he knows he is an innovator for he notices that the earlier grammarians did not give definitions of the parts of speech, but that they showed them by examples:

אמנם קצת המדקדקים לא התחכמו לבאר אותם בגרירהם כי אם במשלים לבד ואמרו בשם כמו  
בגד. צמר. קבר. ובפעל כמו אמר. שמר. ובמלוא השעם כמו נס. כירק. ולכן הטוב שיתבארו  
בגדריהם כמו שהם אצל ההגיוניים כי הוא הלאמוד הנבסף אצל הכל. והנה נדרו השם כשהוא  
חיבה או חבות המורה בהסבמה על ענין מופשט מהזמן וזה אם על עצם או על מקרה. וגדרו  
הפעל כשהוא מורה על ענין ועל זמן מציאותו עובר הוה או עתיד. [...] וגדרו הכלים כשהם  
קשרים וחבורים מה בין העצמים והמקרים או על צדדים ואופנים לקשרים ההם.

[Friedländer & Kohn 1865: 31–32].

Truly, few of the grammarians have shown their skill to clarify those (sc. the parts of speech) by their definitions but rather by examples only. And they said a 'noun' is like *clothing, wool, grave*; and a verb is like *he said, he selected, he guarded*; and a word of reason is like *also, that, only*. And it is good, indeed, that they shall be clarified by their definitions like those of the logicians because it is the custom desirable for all. And, behold, they have defined the 'name' as a word or words signifying a thing by convention without reference to time, be it a substance or an accident. And they have defined the verb as signifying a thing and the time of its passing, present or future existence. [...] And they have defined the 'instruments' as some connexions and links between the substances and the accidents or concerning subordinations and modes of these links.

Durán certainly has a point. If we take, for example, Moses Qimḥi's grammar *Mahalakh* it becomes clear what he means. Moses gives the following description of the noun:

השם נחלק לארבעה חלקים שם העצם ושם התאָר ושם הנחם ושם המספֿר: שם העצם ארין:  
שמים: דשה [...] הם וכל דומהם שהם סימן לקריאת דבר נקראים שם העצם:

ושם התואָר צדיק: רשע: גדול: קטון: עבר: מלך: [...] וכל שם שהוא מתאר מדבר אחר  
נקרא התואָר:

ושם הנחם ישראל: עברי: [...] ביהלחמי:

ושם המספֿר: אחד: שניים: שלשה: [...]

[Moses Qimḥi 1545/46: 2 v<sup>o</sup>–3 r<sup>o</sup>].

The noun is divided into four parts: name of substance, gentile name, name of number, name of attribute.

A name of substance is: *land, heavens, fresh grass* [...]. Those and all the likes which are a mark to name a thing by, are called 'name of substance'.

And a name of attribute is: *pious, impious, great, little, servant, king* [...]. And any name which is attributed to another thing is called 'name of attribute'.

And a gentile name is: *Israelite, Hebrew, [...] Bethlehemite*.

And a name of number is : *one, two, three* [...].

Of interest is that the 'participles' and the *maqor* ('source' = infinitive) are classified as 'nouns'. After Yehudah Ḥayyûḡ and Rabbi Yonah (= Abulwalîd Marwân ibn Ġanâḥ), the *maqor* is called שם הפועל, 'name of action'. The author informs us:

המקור הוא שם הפועל ולמה נקרא מקור שממנו יוצאין כל מיני הפעלים למיניהם עובדים  
ועתידים וגד'.

[Friedländer & Kohn 1865: 49].

And the 'source' is the 'name of action' and it is therefore called 'source' because all kinds of 'actions' come forth from it with respect to their passing and future varieties, etc.

From the fact that the 'name of action' is also called המקרא (= 'well of the accident') it may be concluded that the inflected forms of the verbs are considered to be derived from nouns by the author. A similar opinion is held by Abraham de Balmes. This implies that the noun is held to be prior to the verb. This appears, too, from a statement of Durán on the origin of the parts of speech, in which he compares at the same instant Hebrew with Arabic, Latin and Greek:

ולזה היה השם מונח ראשון למעלתו ואחריו הפועל ואחריו מלת השעם. וזיה לשם מעלה ויתרו  
בלשון העברי קיין חמיר על אופן אחד בלתי משתנה מצד השמוש מה שאין בן בלשון הרומי  
והיוני בי שמות העצמים בהם משתנים בפנים רבים כפי אופנים שמושם ויקראו לאלו החלופים  
צדדים וזה בחלוקה הטבה כי העצם נושא למקרים ומחדשים ואין ראוי שישתנה מצד השמוש  
ואולי תאמר כי זאת המעלה גם בן לשם בלשון העברי וגם אני אשיבך כי לשון עברי הוא  
שנשתבש ויודה על זה קרבכם בגורה והדקדוק. ואין לאומר שיאמר כי הלשון העברי ערבי הוא  
שנשתבש לקדית הלשון הערבי עליו והיותו נברא ראשון לכל הלשונות כמו שהתבאר.

[Friedländer & Kohn 1865: 33].

And, therefore, the noun was imposed first according to its rank, and after it the verb, and after this one the 'word of reason'. And the noun has the highest rank in the Hebrew language, for it is always constituted in one manner without change because of [grammatical] function, very unlike it is in the Latin and Greek languages, because in these the names of substances change in many respects according to the manners of their functions, and they call these 'changes of inflexion', and this according to the change of nature because substance sustains the accidents and renews them; and it is not seemly that it is changed with respect to function, and may-be you will say that this holds also for the noun in the Arabic language and I will answer that is the Hebrew language that is confused, and their connexion in etymology and grammar shows this; and one cannot say that the Hebrew language is Arabic that is confused, because of the priority of the Hebrew language with respect to it, of which the essence is created as the first of all languages, as is obvious.

With *החלופים צדדים*, 'changes of inflexion', cases of the noun in Latin and Greek are indicated. Furthermore, primary and secondary imposition occur also in ancient grammar of the Western tradition (see the quotation from Varro's *De Lingua Latina* in § 2.4).

## 1.2. *Other authors of the fifteenth century*

Philosophical traits—Aristotelian elements in particular, but Neo-Platonic ones as well—are after the appearance of the *Ma'aseh Efod* conspicuous in the Hebrew language arts, not only in Hebrew grammar but also in poetics and rhetoric which were written on largely by grammarians. For instance, the Portuguese-born Yehudah ben Yehiel Messer Leon of Naples was the author of a grammar *Libnat ha-Sappir*—which contains a chapter on metre as well—and also of *Nofet Šufim*, a Hebrew rhetoric based on the Western tradition of the art [Bacher 1974: 223; Hirschfeld 1926: 96, 101; Rabinowitz 1983]. He lectured at the University of Padua (c. 1470/1) and he lived in Naples from c. 1480 until c. 1495, where he was the teacher of Abraham de Balmes and Moses ben Šem Tov ibn Ḥabib [Rabinowitz 1983: xxiv, xxv].



Moses ben Šem Ẓov ibn Ḥabib a native from Lisbon who emigrated in the second half of the fifteenth century to Italy. He wrote on Hebrew poetics and grammar influenced by Aristotelism as well. He composed in Naples, in 1484, his grammar *Perah Šošan*<sup>2</sup>. This grammar is to be qualified as a philosophical grammar, as appears from the superficial description of the work given by Hirschfeld:

The very prolix Introduction begins with a philosophic definition of the term *Grammar*. It indulges largely in metaphysical speculations, even [!] quoting Aristotle. In spite of its bulk the work is of hardly more than literary value.

[Hirschfeld 1926: 101].

As Profiat Durán, Ḥabib also makes use of formal definitions, illustrated by examples. As an example of this, I quote from the beginning of his *Marpe Lašon*, some of his definitions of the parts of speech:

במה הם החלקים  
הרשונים ללשון הקדש שלשה שם פועל מלת טעם וסמנים שפם:

מהו השם  
תיבה מורה בהסבקה על הענין מופשט מהזמן: ולא יורה כל אחד מחלקיו לבדו על חלק  
מזה הענין בראבן שמעון לוי ויהודה

מהו הפועל  
תיבה מורה בהסבקה על הענין ועל זמנו כמו חמק קרב ארדוף טאשיג אחלק  
מהוא מלת טעם תיבה קורשת בין שני חלקי המאמר: ואין לה לבדה הוראה שלימה כמו רק  
פן אך כי

בצה הם חלקי השם  
שלשה שם העצם שם המקרה שם התאר

[Moses ben Sem Tov ibn Habib 1545/46: fol. 1.2 r<sup>o</sup>].

2 Bacher [1974: 222] remarks: «Er schrieb eine grössere Grammatik *Perach Schoschan*, die aber nur aus Citaten bekannt ist». Hirschfeld [1926: 101] located a manuscript of the work in the British Museum.

- How many parts are there? The primary parts of the Holy Language are three: noun, verb and word of reason.
- What is the noun? A word that by convention signifies a unique substance without time; and each of its parts on its own does not signify a part of this substance, such as *Reuben*, *Simeon*, *Levi* and *Judah*.
- What is the verb? A word that by convention signifies a substance and its time, like *he turned aside*, *he passed by*; *I shall pursue*, *I shall displace*, *I shall divide*.
- What is a word of reason? A word that makes a link between two parts of the sentence; and on its own, it has no complete meaning, like *solely*, *lest*, *also*, *but*, *that* [conj.].
- How many are the parts of the noun? Three, the noun of substance, the noun of accident and the noun of attribute.

He divides each of these three into several subcategories: the ‘name of substance’, e.g., has eight subcategories, some of them of a logic origin, such as the  $\text{הַשְׁמַתָּה}$ , the *correlative noun*, such as the pairs *father–son*, *master–slave*. The Aristotelian origin of these definitions is easily shown, e.g., by comparison of the definition of the *šem* by Ḥabib with the Philosopher’s definition of the *onoma* from his work on interpretation:

”Ὄνομα μὲν οὖν ἐστὶ φωνὴ σημαντικὴ κατὰ συνθήκην ἀνευ χρόνου, ἥς μὴδὲν μέρος ἐστὶ σημαντικὸν κεχωρισμένον· ἐν γὰρ τῷ Κάλλιππος τὸ ἵππος οὐδὲν αὐτὸ σημαίνει, ὥσπερ ἐν τῷ λόγῳ καλὸς ἵππος.

[Aristotle, *Περὶ ἑρμηνείας* cap. 2: 16a.20;  
Cook & Tredennick 1973: 116].

A noun is a sound having a meaning established by convention alone but no reference whatever to time, while no part of it has any meaning, considered apart from the whole. Take the proper name 'Goodsteed', for instance. The 'steed' has no meaning apart, as it has in the phrase 'a good steed'.

[Cook & Tredennick 1973: 117].

In Ḥabib's example *Reuben* (רְאוּבֵן) the part בֵּן has not the meaning 'son' as it has in the phrase רְאוּבֵן בֵּן, 'Look! a son', which were probably the words uttered by Leah when she proudly showed her first-born to Jacob and the men of his horde (cf. *Genesis* 29:32).

Similar parallels can be found in other grammars of the fifteenth century. They are also abundantly found in the beginning of the sixteenth century, namely in the 'peculiar' grammar of Abraham ben Meir de Balmes, מְקַנֵּה אֲבָרֵם / *Pecvlyvm Abra* (1523).

## 2. ABRAHAM DE BALMES'S 'PECULIAR' GRAMMAR

Abraham ben Meir de Balmes (also: Balmis) was born c.1440 in Lecce, Southern Italy. He was grandson, perhaps, of the Abraham de Balmes of Lecce (d. 1489) who was appointed Court Physician of Ferdinand I, King of Naples, in 1472.

In 1492, Abraham ben Meir de Balmes obtained a doctorate in philosophy and medicine at Naples University by special permission of Pope Innocentius VIII. During his stay in Naples, he probably was acquainted with Messer Leon, whom he mentions as his teacher, and Moses ben Šem Ṭov ibn Ḥabib.

In 1510, when Naples came under Spanish rule and the Jews were expelled from the kingdom, Balmes appears to have gone to Northern Italy. Later he went to Venice, where he became personal physician to the Cardinal Grimani.

Balmes was one of those cultured all-round men who served as mediators between the Arab and Western European cultures. It was under Grimani's auspices that he carried out his work of translation into Latin of various works of mediæval Arabic scholars, of course from the Hebrew intermediate ver-

sions. He translated, among others, Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* with Averroës's 'Major Commentary', an extra-ordinarily rare edition, which was printed in 1520 in Venice (*Liber posteriorum analiticorum Aristotelis: cum magnis commentariis Auverrois. Interprete Abramo de Balmes, non vidi*). Various Averroistic materials which he had rendered into Latin were also included in the standard sixteenth-century edition of Aristotle.

He is said to have taught at the University of Padua and when he died, in 1523, many of his gentile students followed the bier.

Shortly after his death, the Flemish printer Daniel Bomberg printed his huge *מקנה אברהם / Pecvlivm Abrae. Grammatica hebraea vna cum Latino edita per Doctissimum Virum Magistrum Abraham de Balmis Artium & Medicinæ doctorem. Impressa Venetijs in Aedibus Danielis Bombergi. XIII. Kalendas Decembris M.D.XXIII (= 17 November 1523).*

Most of his works are only extant in manuscript in the Library of the Vatican. [Roth 1959: 76; *EJ* 4: 140–142; Klijnsmit 1992b].

### 2.1. *General remarks on the grammar and its contents*

In this section I will first give an overview of the contents of the grammar, then follows a brief treatment of Balmes's definition of grammar and here I will also show how the author has presented the matter, and, in particular, I will give a characterization of the function of the Latin translation.

For the history of Hebrew linguistics, it is noteworthy that, except by Spinoza, Balmes's grammar was also used by several seventeenth-century Hebraists, such as Johannes Buxtorf the Elder (1564–1629), Menasseh ben Israel (1604–1657) and Franciscus Mercurius van Helmont (1614–1699), whose phonetic description of Hebrew is primarily based on the one given by Balmes [Klijnsmit 1992a: 183–188; 1996: 273–275].

In the eighteenth century, it was used by—among others—Albert Schultens (1686–1756) and in the beginning of the nine-

teenth, by Wilhelm Gesenius (1786–1842), who refers to this huge grammar in 1817 more than once.

Gerardus Joannes Vossius (1577–1649)—who possessed a more than average knowledge of Hebrew—mentions Balmes in his short history of Hebrew linguistic scholarship, which he has given in his *De Arte Grammatica Libri VII*.

Balmes's *Miqneh Abram / Pecylym Abræ* is a bilingual grammar (facing Hebrew and Latin pages). It has been printed and bound as a Hebrew book which was also done in the case of monolingual grammars of Hebrew by Christian authors such as Reuchlin's *Rudimenta* 1506 and the many editions of Buxtorf's *Thesaurus* (first edition 1609)<sup>3</sup>.

It had been printed in Venice by the famous Flemish publisher Daniel Bomberg who employed Jews as correctors, among others Balmes and later also the famous grammarian Elia Levita who, besides his own grammatical works, edited many grammars of his predecessors, such as Moses Qimḥi and Abraham ibn Ezra.

The publisher, as he himself assures us in the Latin preface to the grammar, had had difficulties in acquiring his Hebrew type, which is nowadays referred to as Bomberg-type.

Since the author died before the grammar was completed, the last chapter was written by Qalonymos bar R. David Qalonymos and finished in July 1523, as it is stated in the colophon.

I have elsewhere characterized Hebrew grammars by Jewish authors of the period after Reuchlin as «reframing the traditional Judæo–Arabic grammar into the classical scheme of grammatical description, while elements of traditional Hebrew grammar are maintained because they are considered to be correct» [Klijnsmit 1986: 4].

This qualification holds true for Balmes also, as we will see, but only partially. His description of Hebrew is not put into the

3 Rabinowitz [1983: lxxv.n.141] mentions an edition by Bomberg without the translation into Latin (duplicated Tel Aviv 1972, *non vidi*). I doubt whether it really is an other edition and not simply a binding of the Hebrew pages only. If the lines in the Hebrew text are numbered, then this certainly is the case.

straightjacket of grammatical description which was customary in his days, the grammar of Latin. For instance, his description of the Hebrew noun lacks a Latin case system, a feature that is nearly always present in European Hebrew grammars since Reuchlin. We find, however, notably in his remarks on syntax, elements of the Western tradition, especially of Modistic grammar. Further, I suspect that Balmes had studied Varro's *De Lingua Latina*.

Balmes appears to be well-versed in Hebrew grammatical literature: he discusses the opinions of many of his predecessors, quite often in great detail, and gives his own opinion on certain topics in which he shows his critical attitude, e.g., in his search for language universals as an aid for the description of Hebrew.

## 2.2. *Characteristics of grammatical method*

The definition of grammar betrays the influence of the Western tradition: it is a restatement of *Grammatica est ars bene loquendi atque scribendi*:

דקדוק לשון הקודש הוא ידיעת המכתב והמבטא לפי מה שיאזרח להורות על הענינים כפי  
הסקמת מניח לשון הקודש: ואמר ידעת המכתב הוא מקום הסוק כי דקדוק כל  
לשון הוא ידיעת המכתב והמבטא לא דקדוק לשון הקודש לבד:

Grammatica linguæ sanctimoniæ est cognitio scripturæ  
& pronunciationis secundum id quod decet ad significandum  
super res secundum conuenientiam impositoris ydiomatis sanc-  
timoniæ: & me dicere cognitionem scripturæ & pronunciatio-  
nis est loco generis: quia grammatica omnis linguæ est cog-  
nitio scripturæ & pronunciationis non grammatica linguæ  
sanctimoniæ solum:

[Balmes 1523: b1 v<sup>o</sup> / b2 r<sup>o</sup>.3–7].

Grammar+of tongue+of the+holiness it[=is] knowledge+of  
the+write and+the+pronunciation according-to it which+to-be-sui-  
table to+signify upon the+things according-to the+convention+of  
idiom+of the+holiness.

And+me+to-say the+knowledge+of the+writ and+the+pronuciation it[=is] in-place+of the+general: because grammar+of every tongue it[=is] knowledge+of the+writ and+the+pronuciation not grammar+of tongue+of the+holiness only<sup>4</sup>.

With this translation into peculiar English I have tried to put the native and near-native speaker of English into a position comparable to that of a contemporary student of Balmes's grammar.

Bearing in mind that the students the grammar was intended for had a good knowledge of Latin, we may assume that they would be able to contrast the author's 'peculiar' Latin with their own. Therefore, I consider a translation of the first lines such as I have given to be, in fact, the only correct way of representation of Balmes's aim.

The word-by-word translation might have had its origin in didactic practice in teaching Hebrew as it was customary in Balmes's circles. But *verbatim* translations were also common in Renaissance practice, such as in the Latin translations from Greek by George of Trebizond (1395–1484) [cf. Copenhagen 1990: 82]. Because of its effect upon students of Hebrew, however, the grammar might best be qualified by the following anachronistic description: an implicit contrastive grammatical analysis of Hebrew in lexical units of Latin, their inflectional forms representing syntactic relations of Hebrew. In his treatment of the verbal moods and tenses, Balmes also makes explicit contrastive-grammatical remarks, as I will show.

4 All translations of bilingual texts reflect Hebrew mainly, though in some instances the Latin text has been taken into account. In this 'translation' of the definition of grammar, I have tried to express morpho-syntactic elements by the sign '+'; a minus sign as in And+me+to-say indicates that in *to-say* the element *to* is supplied because I wanted to express an English infinitive since—in this case—the gerund could be mistakenly interpreted as a participle. More in line with English linguistic usage the translation reads: 'Grammar of the Holy Tongue consists in knowledge of writing and pronunciation in agreement with the suitable manner of signifying things according to the convention of the imposer of the Holy Tongue. And I say 'knowledge of writing and pronunciation' is the general category: because knowledge of writing and pronunciation pertains to the grammar of any language and not to the grammar of the Holy Tongue only'.

As it appears from the preface and from the first chapter the grammar was intended for Christian students and, therefore, a parallel Latin translation of the Hebrew text of the grammar was given. For this reason, too, Balmes gives reference, e.g., to *Genesis* סמן ב' לפי קהמים ... *capitulo secundo secundum Romanos* which should be paraphrased as ... *chapter 2 according to the division into chapters of the Christian Bible* [Balmes 1523: b1 v<sup>o</sup> / b2 r<sup>o</sup>.17].

From Bomberg's preface we learn that it was translated into 'peculiar' Latin for a special reason:

Habes mentem meam optime lector, quare hebraicis literis insudem, & quam ob causam omnes linguam hanc sacrosanctam callere velim. Quisquis ergo es qui hanc affectas, atque addiscere expetis, en tibi copia, & facultas maxima, verbum enim reddi verbo (vt vides) in traductione curaui. Idque propense, ac obnixè eundem Abraham semper rogaui, ast vbi opus aliquantulum processerat, decori paulo magis indulgere incœpit, demum vbi diem suum obiisset idem Abraham, maiori libertate vsum Caloen Calonymum virum apprime doctum sententias ferè totas permutasse æquo animo tuli.

[Bomberg in Balmes 1523: a2 v<sup>o</sup>].

You know the purpose, dearest reader, why I sweat on the Hebrew letters and for which reason I wish everyone to be versed in this most sacred tongue. Whoever you are that endeavours and strives to learn this language behold your most copious treasure: for I have ordered one single word to be rendered—as you see—by one word in the translation. And for this reason I have always—friendly but urgently—requested the same Abraham to yield gradually to elegance in the course of the work. When the same Abraham had met the day of his death I have ordered Calo Calonymus, an exceedingly learned man, to change—with application of more liberty—nearly all the sentences in the same spirit.

And then Bomberg tells us that this arrangement of the grammar has been chosen for didactic reasons, for which, too, the translation is provided with numbers corresponding to the line numbers of the Hebrew text.

We also learn from Bomberg's preface that it was not the printer but the author himself who had provided the translation



and that Qalonymus corrected and finished it because of the death of the author.

An interesting feature of the *Miqneh Abram* is that its author searches for language universals to give correct grammatical definitions, in this case of the verb:

אמנם אחרי ראי הפכת רגשת המון המדקדקים חדשים גם ישנים בחרתי לכונן שרש הפעלים  
ויסוד סבת חלוקותיהם ויגעתי בדקדוקי לשונות מתחלפות להבין מה יקרה לפעלים בכלל  
במה שהם פעלים חלוקי המינים מפאת עצמם ומה נאות לה ביחוד מיוחדת ללשונות שונות:  
ומצאתי כי בהיות הפועל מורה העשות הענין מדבר בזמן כמו שכתבנו למעלה

Verumtamen postquam vidi controuersiam fremitus multitudinis grammaticorum nouorum etiam ueterum elexi apprimere radicem uerborum: & fundamentum causæ suarum partitionum: & laboraui in grammaticis linguarum uariarum ad intelligendum quid accidat uerbis vniversaliter inquantum sunt uerba distinctarum specierum ex se: & quid deceat eis secundum proprietatem propriam linguis diuersis. Et inueni quod essendo quod uerbum significat fieri rem ex re tempore terminato vt scripsimus superius.

[Balmes 1523: {r7} v<sup>o</sup> / {r8} r<sup>o</sup>.11–16].

However, after I saw the noisy controversy of the multitude of the new as well as the old grammarians I have chosen to find out the root of the verbs and the fundament of the cause of its partition. And I have laboriously studied in grammars of a variety of languages to understand what would universally be accident to the verbs and in how far verbs are of distinct kinds on account of their substances; and what would be suitable to them according to their very propriety in different languages. And I have found that in essence the verb signifies the 'thing' being done by a thing with determination of time, as we have written above.

In his treatment of the verbal moods and tenses, Balmes also makes explicit contrastive–grammatical remarks from which it appears that he is well–versed in grammars of other languages, in this case of Latin:

וכן אין המאמר המתאווה צד מתחלף לחלוף זמני הפעלים כי אין תפלה וחשוקה כי עם על  
העתיד להיות ואין לעבר הולך את זמנים כמו שכתבנו מנחי הלשון הרומי וזה כי אין עבר  
אלה נשלם

& sic non est oratio optatiua modus differens ob differentiam temporum verborum: quia non est petitio & cupido nisi *præter* futuro ad essendum. Et non est *præterito* diuersitas significationis temporum prout putauerunt instituentes linguam romanam: *quam non est præteritum nisi perfectum*:

[Balmes 1523: [t6] v° / [t7] r°.19–22].

And, thus, there is no optative sentence which differs in mood because of the difference in time of the verbs: because there is neither question nor wish except for being in the future. And there is concerning the past no variation of tenses as the opinion of the institutors of the Roman language was: there is no past unless ‘perfectly done’.

As to the tenses, Abraham de Balmes adheres to the old point of view that the Hebrew verb has no present whereby he rejects the ‘modern’ point of view:

ולכן טוב מזה ומזה מה שכתב רבי יונה בספר הרקמה שזה יורה שלמות הלשון העברית  
שהיא דרכה [!] על טבעי מצויות הדברים וכמו שאין זמן הרה באמת [!] כי אם עבר או  
עתיד

Et ideo melius *quam* hoc & illud est *quod* scripsit rabi Iona in libro rikma: *quod* hoc significet *perfectionem* linguæ hebreæ: *quod* ipsa procedat *super* naturis essendi res: & sicut non est *tem*pus *præsens* uere nisi *præteritum* aut *futurum*:

[Balmes 1523: t4 v° / [t5] r°.16–18].

And therefore there is better than this; and that is what Rabbi Yonah [= Abulwalîd Marwân ibn Ġanâḥ] has written in *Sefer Riqmah*, namely, that it indicates the perfection of the Hebrew language that it proceeds according to the nature of essence of things and that, therefore, there is really no present tense but only a past and a future.

The ultimate source of this opinion are found in Aristotle’s opinions on time which are expressed in his *Physics*. The philosopher implies there that present time is over as soon as it has begun:

Τὸ μὲν γὰρ αὐτοῦ γέγονε καὶ οὐκ ἔστι, τὸ δὲ μέλλει καὶ  
οὐπω ἔστιν ἐκ δὲ τούτων καὶ ὁ ἄπειρος καὶ ὁ ἀεὶ λαμβανόμενος

χρόνος σύγκειται. τὸ δ' ἐκ μὴ ὄντων συγκείμενον ἀδύνατον ἂν εἶναι δόξειε μετέχει οὐσίας.

[Aristotle, *Φυσικὴ* IV, x: 218a].

Some of it is past and no longer exists, and the rest is future and does not yet exist; and time, whether limitless or any given length of time we take, is entirely made up of no-longer and not-yet; and how can we conceive of that which is composed of non-existents sharing in existence in any way?

[Wicksteed & Cornford 1963: 372–373].

Aristotelian elements abound in this grammar as they did in Hebrew grammars of the fifteenth century. A similar description of tense, which «rests on a consideration of the relationship between the beginning and the end of the actions» expressed by the verbs, is also found in sixteenth-century Italian vernacular grammars, such as in Giambulari's grammar<sup>5</sup> [cf. Padley 1988: 117; 115–116].

Although traces of Greek philosophical and linguistic thinking are also found in early Hebrew grammar and in linguistic works of the teachers of the Jews, the Arabs, we reach easily the conclusion that fifteenth-century Hebrew linguistics had been subject to a revival of Aristotelian philosophy. Balmes is probably the last representative of that revival.

It is not only that Balmes applied several Aristotelian concepts to linguistics but his whole method of grammatical investigation agrees with the general scientific method propagated by the Stagirite. The *Miqneh Abram* has an arrangement which proceeds from simple to complex, and thus its arrangement is similar to the structure of language itself: letters and vowels are the basic elements of language, and syllables, words and sentences are the complex linguistic units.

5 *De la lingua che si parla e scrive in Firenze* (1551, non vidi). Padley [1988: 115–116] states: «Grambulari, as usual following Linacre closely, defines tense as that which 'shows a certain quality of the operations to earlier ("il prima") and later ("il poi")».

Furthermore, the author refers to Plato's *Cratylus* in connection with the imposition of language. The imposer of language, Plato's 'lawgiver', is replaced by the creator of the universe by the author, whereby he refers to *Genesis* 2: 19, and thus pagan and Jewish opinions on the origin of language are reconciled. The fact that the first language—and this, of course, was according to Jewish philosophers and grammarians the Hebrew language—was instituted by God also implies also that Hebrew was a conventional language but, yet, it was created according to nature [Balmes 1523: b1 v<sup>o</sup> / b2 r<sup>o</sup>].

#### 2.4. *Primacy of the noun*

An important issue for Balmes's opinion on the parts of speech with respect to their division are the accidents of primary and derived imposition of language. By primary imposition, only nouns were to be instituted: Adam was made to give *names* to the things, not *attributes* and (inflected) *verbs*:

והתקנה הראשונה והנזכרת הם משיגי השמות כי מניח הלשון הניח השם דבר או שם המקרה או שם הפעל ואחרי כן הוא או הבאים אחריו נהגו לעזור מן המנה ראשונה שם מורה על המתואר במונח ראשונה: וכן יהיה גדר המונח ראשונה כשהוא המונח ראשונה להורות על ענין נמצא בעצמו בלתי מוגבל בזמן יגדרהו כמו ישראל ארץ ירושלים הבקוה אכל כי עם כל זה שאכל מורה פעל האכילה בזמן לא יורה אותו זמן ידוע וגבילוהו בנושה המרואר בו כמו פעל אכל שמורה אותו בזמן העבר כנושא המתואר לפעל האכילה:

Et impositio prima & deriuata sunt euenta *nominum*: quia impositor linguæ imposuit *nomen* rei: aut *nomen* accidentis: aut *nomen* uerbi: & deinde ipse aut venientes post ipsum consueuerunt deriuare ab imposito primo *nomen* aliud significans super subiectum agnominatum per impositum primum.

Et sic erit diffinitio impositi primo *quod* sit impositum primo ad significandum super rem existentem per se non terminatam tempore: *quod* ipsam finiret אכל ירושלים חממה אכל *quia* cum toto hoc *quod* אכל significat actionem commestionis in tempore non significat illam in tempore certo *quod* terminat ipsam in subiecto agnominato per ipsam: vt est uerbum אכל *quod* significat ipsam tempore *præterito* in subiecto agnominato per actionem comestionis.

[Balmes 1523: [h6] v<sup>o</sup> / [h7] r<sup>o</sup>.23– [h7] v<sup>o</sup> / [h8] r<sup>o</sup>.2].

And the primary and the derived imposition are 'events' of nouns, because the imposer of the language imposed the 'thing-name', the name of accident, or the name of action [= infinitive of the verb], and later, he or those that came after him accustomed themselves to derive from what was first imposed, an other name signifying a subject predicated by the first imposed name.

And thus is the definition of what was first imposed: that it is imposed first to signify an existing thing in itself, not determined by a time which defines it, like *Israel*, *land*, *Jerusalem*, *wisdom*, *to eat*, for together with which *to eat* signifies the action of *eating*, it does not signify this with respect to a fixed time which determines it in the subject predicated by it, such as the verb *ate*, which is signifying the action in the past time in the subject predicated by the action of eating.

Balmes continues with an explanation of secondary imposition. A result of secondary imposition is the attributive noun (adjective, title, gentilic noun etc.), such as *Yerušalmi*, 'Jerusalemite', the inflected verb and the particle. So are the—adjectival—numerals derived from substantive nouns, i.e., *one* from *oneness* etc. In our discussion of Profiat Durán's grammar we have also noted 'primary imposition'.

The topic of imposition of names occurs also in Plato's *Cratylus*. Although the philosopher does not explicitly mention primary and secondary imposition, secondary imposition is easily derived from his dialogue. There is, however, an other possible source, to wit, *De Lingua Latina* by Varro (116–27 B.C.) which has been printed six times during Balmes's lifetime [Kent 1977: xxvii–xxix]. Varro states:

Duo igitur omnino verborum principia, impositio <et declinatio><sup>6</sup>, alterum ut fons, alterum ut rivus. Impositicia nomina esse voluerunt quam paucissima, quo citius ediscere possent, declinata<sup>7</sup> quam plurima, quo facilius omnes quibus ad usum opus esset dicerent. [...]

6 The words *et declinatio*, occurring in the Codex Vindobonensis, are supplemented by the editor.

7 Kent has—correctly—translated *declinata* here into 'derived'. In Antiquity, derivation is also called 'declination' (Greek: *πρωσις*); cf. my translation.

Utriusque generis, et vocabuli et verbi, quaedam priora, quaedam posteriora; priora ut homo, scribit, posteriora ut doctus et docte: [...]

Cum de his nomen sit primum (prius enim nomen est quam verbum temporale et reliqua posterius quam nomen et verbum), prima igitur nomina: quare de eorum declinatione quam de verbo ante dicam.

[Varro L. VIII, §§ 5, 12, 13; Kent 1979: 374, 380].

The origins of words are therefore two in number, and no more: imposition and inflection, or derivation; the one is as it were the spring, the other the brook. Men have wished that imposed nouns should be as few as possible, that they might be able to learn them more quickly; but inflected, or derived, nouns they have wished to be as numerous as possible, that all might the more easily say those nouns which they needed to use.

Of the two kinds, noun and verb, certain words are primary and certain are secondary: primary like *homo* 'man' and *scribit* 'writes', and secondary like *doctus* 'learned' and *docte* 'learnedly', [...]

Since among these the noun is first: for the noun is prior to the verb with its reference to 'time', and the other words are posterior to the noun and the verb. The nouns, then, are first: therefore I shall speak of the form-variations of nouns before I take up those of the verbs<sup>8</sup>.

Varro accepts nouns and verbs as results of primary imposition, the other parts of speech are the products of derivation and inflection.

Secondary imposition is brought about, too, by metaphor and metonymy. In Balmes's explanation we find Aristotle in a Hebrew disguise:

8 Kent [1979: 381] translates: «Since among these the noun is first—for the noun comes ahead of the verb, and the other words stand relatively later to the noun and the verb—the nouns are accordingly first. Therefore I shall speak of the form variation of nouns before I take up those of the verb». Kent's translation is incorrect insofar he has misunderstood the term *verbum temporale*, by which, no doubt, the *verb* is meant by the author (cf. the—nowadays old-fashioned—German term *Zeitwort*).

והמושתקים הם המונחים ראשונה על ענינים ודושים ואחריו כן הושתקו על ענינים אחרים דומים לראשונה בענין מה במדרגה אחת כמו שם המושתק שהוראתו המפורסמת היא על הנעתק מקום לקום ואנחנו משתמשים בו לקרא השם אשר לקחנו הוראתו מענין ידוע מפורסם ונקראנו בו ענין אחר במלאכת הדקדוק וגם עושים זה תמיד בעלי רוב המלאכות וזו יתיה מפאת הדמיון או הקרבה הנחס כמו שנעתיק שם הרעה אל הווקנה כי כן הבחירות אל הווקנה כמובנה על הרעה ולכן נקרא ימי הווקנה ימי הרעה :

Translata sunt imposita primo super res certas: & deinde translata sunt ad res alias similes primis in re aliqua gradu vno: ut nomen translatum: cuius significatio peruulgata est de translato a loco in locum: & nos utimur eo ad dicendum nomen cuius accepimus significationem ipsius ex re certa peruulgata: & uocauimus per ipsum rem aliam in arte grammaticæ: & etiam faciunt hoc continuo auctores maioris partis artium: & hoc erit ex parte similitudinis: aut permutationis proportionis: vt quod transferamus nomen mali ad senectutem: quia sic est iuuenta ad senectutem sicut est bonum ad malum: & ideo uocamus dies senectutis dies mali.

[Balmes 1523: h2 v<sup>o</sup> / h3 r<sup>o</sup>.25 – h3 v<sup>o</sup> / h4 r<sup>o</sup>.4].

Metaphors are primarily imposed on certain things and afterwards transferred to other things gradationally similar in something to the first ones, such as a metonym of which the signification has become generally known from being transferred from one topic to an other. And we make use of it to give a name of which we have accepted the signification from a certain generally known thing; and we have called by it another thing in the art of grammar as the majority of the masters of the arts do also. And this takes place on account of similarity or change in the proportion, when we transfer, for instance, the noun *evil* to *old age* because *youth* has the same proportion to *old age* as *good* has to *evil*. And we call *the days of old age*, for this reason, *the days of evil* [Ecclesiastes 12: 1].

Balmes's dependency on Aristotle is obvious: it is an adaptation of the *Poetics*, whereby metaphor has been developed to a grammatical concept—and it should be noted that Balmes refers explicitly to this work of the Greek philosopher [Balmes 1523: h4 v<sup>o</sup> / h4 r<sup>o</sup>.6]—only Balmes has substituted a Biblical phrase for Aristotle's example:

Τὸ δὲ ἀνάλογον λέγω, ὅταν ὁμοίως ἔχη τὸ δεύτερον πρὸς τὸ πρῶτον καὶ τὸ τέταρτον πρὸς τὸ τρίτον ἐρεῖ γὰρ ἀντὶ τοῦ

δευτέρου τὸ τέταρτον ἢ ἀντὶ τοῦ τέταρτου τὸ δευτέρον. καὶ ἐνίοτε προστιθέασιν ἀνθ' οὗ λέγει πρὸς ὃ ἐστι. λέγω δὲ οἶον ὁμοίως ἔχει φιάλη πρὸς Διόνυσον καὶ ἀσπίς πρὸς Ἄρη· ἐρεῖ τοίνυν τὴν φιάλην ἀσπίδα Διονύσου καὶ τὴν ἀσπίδα φιάλην Ἄρεως. ἢ ὁ γῆρας πρὸς βίον, καὶ ἐσπέρα πρὸς ἡμέραν· ἐρεῖ τοίνυν τὴν ἐσπέραν γῆρας ἡμέρας ἢ ὥσπερ Ἐμπεδοκλῆς, καὶ τὸ γῆρας ἐσπέραν βίου ἢ δυσμάς βίου.

[Aristotle, *Περὶ ποιητικῆς*, c. 21: 11–13, Hamilton Fyfe 1982: 80].

Metaphor by analogy means this: when B is to A as D is to C, then instead of B the poet will say D and B instead of D. And sometimes they add that to which the term supplanted by metaphor is relative. For instance, a cup is to Dionysus what a shield is to Ares; so he will call the cup “Dionysus’s shield” and the shield “Ares’ cup.” Or old age is to life as evening is to day; so he will call the evening “day’s old age” or use Empedocles’ phrase; and old age he will call “the evening of life” or “life’s setting sun.”

[Hamilton Fyfe 1982: 81].

## 2.5. ‘Syntax’

The seventh chapter of Balmes’s grammar is devoted to *compositio & regimen*. It contains not only remarks on syntax but also treats of the servile letters—which are, after all, of syntactic importance.

In the initial section of the chapter Balmes describes the ‘task of the grammarian’, explaining the relation of ‘matter’ and ‘form’:

אחר שהתבאר פשוטי הלשון שהם האותיות והנקודות והשמות והפעלים : מלות השם יתחייב לשלמות המלאכה לפרש המאמר המורכב מהם ובהיות ההרכבה מינים רבים כי ממנה ההרכבה ערוב אשר לא יבחרו הפשוטים במורכב מהם בהרכבת התירוש והמים בתמר אשר לא יבחרו בו באינם נמצאים בו כי אם בכל : וכן היתה בהכמת הקדוקן ההרכבת הבנינים שזכרנו בשער החמשי : וממנה ההרכבה שכנית שיתבדרו במורכב תלקיו אשר הורכב מהם המדקדק לדבר פה : כי המדקדק לא יעיין במאמרים בפה שהם קולות או מכתב אלה בפה שהם מורים כפי דרכי הלשון וזאת היא צורת המאמרים :

Postquam exposita sunt simplicia linguæ quæ sunt litteræ & puncta & nomina & uerba & dictiones rationis oportet ad perfectionem artis exponere orationem compositam ex illis: & existente



tionis qua non secernuntur simplicia in composito ex eis: sicut est compositio musti & aquæ in aquato: in quo non secernuntur: & non inueniuntur in eo nisi in potentia. Et sic fuit in scientia grammaticæ compositio coniugationum quam retulimus in capitulo quinto. Et de illa est compositio vicinitatis in qua secernuntur in composito suæ partes ex quibus fuit compositum: & hæc compositio erit compositio materiæ orationis solum: aut compositio eius materiæ & eius formæ. Et de compositione hac secundum materiam solum non est statuti grammatici loqui in ea: quia grammaticus non speculatur orationes inquantum sunt uoces aut scriptura: sed inquantum sunt significantes secundum modos linguæ: & hæc est forma orationum.

[Balmes 1523: B4 vº / [B5] rº.15–26].

After the explanation of the simple elements of the language, viz. the letters and the points, the nouns, the verbs and the words of reason, it is proper to the perfection of the art to explain the sentence which is composed of these; and composition is of many kinds: one of them is the 'mixed' composition in which the simple elements are not separate in their composite, as such is the composition of must and water in qualified wine, in which the components are not separate and are not found separately in it but in potency. And the like in the art of grammar, is the composition of the conjugations which we have mentioned in chapter 5. And another is the composition of relationship, of which the component parts are separate in the composite. And this composition is composition of the matter of the sentence solely or composition of its matter and of its form. And speaking of composition in respect to its matter solely does not belong to the task of the grammarian, for the grammarian does not consider the sentences insofar as they are sounds or script, but insofar as they are signifying according to the manners of the language, and this is the form of the sentences.

From which it becomes apparent that our author has a hylo-morphic approach to language. This statement about 'the task of the grammarian' is similar to the one Thomas of Erfurt gives in his *Grammatica speculativa*:

12 *Vox*. Item sciendum est, quod vox, inquantum vox, non consideratur a grammatico, sed inquantum signum, quia grammatica est de signis rerum; et quia vox est habilissimum signum inter

ca est de signis rerum; et quia vox est habilissimum signum inter alia signa, ideo vox inquantum signum prius consideratur a grammatico, quam alia signa rerum. Sed quia esse signum accedit voci, ideo grammaticus considerans vocem, considerat eam per accidens.

[Thomas of Erfurt, cap. vi, 12; Bursill–Hall 1972: 148].

12 *Expression*. Furthermore it should be known that expression, in so far as it is expression, is not considered by the grammarian, but in so far as it is a sign, it is, since grammar deals with the signs of things, and because the expression is the most suitable sign among other signs, therefore the expression, in so far as it is a sign, is considered by the grammarian before other signs of things. But because being a sign is a property of the expression, therefore the grammarian, in considering expression, does so accidentally.

[Bursill–Hall 1972: 149].

Balmes states that ‘in every composition of a sentence, in matter and in form, there are required necessarily two things, of which one determines the other: either the first determines the second, or the second determines the first; indeed, in every composition of matter and form there is found composition of terminant and terminate, because if this is not the case, there is no formal composition’ [Balmes 1523: [B5] v<sup>o</sup> / [B6] r<sup>o</sup>.19–23].

This description of composition shows similarity with Modistic grammar (cf. Bursill–Hall 1972: [105]–[107]). Also the types of composition, like transitive and ‘immanent’ construction, have a Modistic appearance. As an example of immanent composition, Balmes gives:

הקשיל קוה בעמדת ולוה הלך בי לפי צד הוראת זה השם לוה שהוא שם ישר יורה הכתו  
להיות מוגבל בהרבה המאמר ובדי הוא שיאמר ממנו ענין מה : והלך הוא פעל עמד וברד  
בי מדרכו שיגביל מונח הפעל שיושר עליו ולא יעבוד שיגביל פעולתו ענין שתורה  
תיבה אחרת שתורה עליו ולא יעבוד שיגביל פעולתו ענין שתורה תיבה אחרת שתורה עליו  
בדרך היוצאים : ולכן נאמר כי לוה במאמר הזה שמוש עומד בלתי הורד : וזה הוא מקום  
תועיל בו חלוקת הפעלים אל טיפדים ובורדים : וכן נתבאר בלש גם כן כי בלש מגביל דרך  
הביאה ולא תעבור הוראתו על מגביל אחר וגבילה :

*Exemplum huius in immanente est & Loth iuit: quia secundum modum significationis huius nominis Loth: quod est*

positum terminatum in compositione orationis: & sufficit illud quod dicatur de eo res aliqua. Et iuit est uerbum immanens & intransituum: quia moris eius est quod terminet suppositum agens actionem eius res quam significat: & non transibit quod terminet actionem eius res quam significet dictio alia: quæ significet super ipsum: & non transiet ut terminet eius actionem res quam significat dictio alia quæ significat illam secundum modum transeuntium: & ideo dicemus quod eâi in oratione hac ipsius regimen est immanens intransituum. Et hic est locus in quo iuuat diuisio uerborum in transitua & intransitua. Et similiter eîá àáúâ etiam quia eîá plane terminat modum aduentus: [lege: aduentus:] & non transit ipsius significatio super terminans alterum quod terminet illam.

[Balmes 1523: [B6] v° / [B7] r°.1–10].

An example of an immanent composition is *And Lot went*<sup>9</sup> because according to the mode of signifying of this name *Lot*, which is an uninflected noun; this indicates that it has the inherent quality to be the determined suppositum (= *subject*) in the construction of the sentence. And that has the logical consequence that something else is predicated of it. And *went* is an immanent and intransitive verb, because it has the property that the acting subject determines the action which it signifies, and it shows no transition so that it determines its action with respect to a thing which is signified by an other word which is signifying it according to the mode of the transitives. And, therefore, we say of *Lot* in this sentence that its government is immanent–intransitive. And this is the instance where the division of verbs in transitives and intransitives is useful. And similarly in *And she came secretly* {*Judges* 4: 21} too because *secretly* clearly determines the manner of *coming*; and its signification shows no transition to an other terminant which determines it.

In the transitive construction *And Jacob gave Esau bread*, the first *rectum* is *Jacob*, *gave* is the *terminus* of *Jacob*, and because *gave* is transitive it is determined by another *terminant*, namely *bread*. The syntactic status of *Esau* is not described by Balmes [1523: [B6] v° / [B7] r°.13–18].

<sup>9</sup> I have not found this phrase. The nearest in construction is יָשַׁב בְּעָרֵי הַכְּפָר הַזֶּה ‘and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain’, *Genesis* 13: 12.

*nant*, namely *bread*. The syntactic status of *Esau* is not described by Balmes [1523: [B6] v<sup>o</sup> / [B7] r<sup>o</sup>.13–18].

Although these syntactic analyses are difficult to understand for twentieth-century linguists it is easy to ascertain the source of these remarks on syntax, to wit, Modistic grammar. We find the equivalent of *Lot went* in the *Grammatica speculativa* of Thomas of Erfurt:

*Constructio intransitiva et transitiva.* Resumo ergo quod dictum est, quod in omni constructione est primum constructibile, et secundum. Aut ergo secundum dependet ad primum, aut primum dependet ad secundum, secundo per sui dependentiam a primo recedente. Si secundum dependet ad primum, sic est constructio intransitiva. Constructio ergo intransitiva est constructio, in qua secundum constructibile, per suos modos significandi, dependet ad primum; ut dicendo, *Socrates currit*, hoc verbum *currit*, quod est constructibile secundum in hac constructione, dependet ad suppositum, quod est primum constructibile. Item dicendo, *Socrates legit bene*, hoc adverbium *bene*, quod est secundum constructibile in ista constructione, dependet ad verbum, quod est primum constructibile.

[Bursill–Hall 1972, caput XLVII, 92: 282].

*The intransitive and transitive constructions.* Let me summarize what has been said, that in every construction there is a first and a second constructible. Either the second depends on the first, or the first depends on the second with the second separated from the first by means of its dependence on itself. If the second depends on the first, then it is an intransitive construction. An intransitive construction is therefore a construction in which the second constructible, by means of its modes of signifying, depends on the first, as when we say: *Socrates currit*; the verb *currit*, which is the second constructible in this construction, depends on the suppositum which is the first constructible.

[Bursill–Hall 1972, chapter XLVII, 92: 283].

Transitivity and intransitivity are not limited to constructions which have a verb in their ‘surface structure’: «רֹאשׁוֹן לְבָן / *Ruben albus*», ‘white Reuben’, is an intransitive construction [Balmes 1523: [B6] v<sup>o</sup> / [B7] r<sup>o</sup>.27].

The phrase *Socrates albus* is qualified by Thomas as a *constructio determinati*, which is a subclass of the 'intransitive construction of persons' [Bursill-Hall 1972, I, 99: 292–293]. The phrase *white Ruben*, an intransitive subject construction, is called by Balmes *compositio agnominis cum agnominato* [Balmes 1523: [B6] v<sup>o</sup> / [B7] r<sup>o</sup>.27]. The term *agnomen* is used in the sense of Thomas's *adiectivum denominativum*.

There are numerous types of constructions in Balmes's grammar which have their equivalents in the *Grammatica speculativa*. But I think the comparison given here is sufficient to illustrate the post-Modistic character of the *Miqneh Abram*.

An other element in Balmes's grammar is its rhetorical foundation which is also found in contemporary grammars of Italian. The Italian grammars, such as Trissino's *Grammatichetta* (1529), have

a distinctly semantic, if not logical, orientation. [...] As with most other authors, there is an initial formally division of nouns into primary or derived, and simple or compound [...] The derived nouns are then classified, according to a mixture of semantic criteria, into the following groups: possessives [...]; 'nomi patrii' or 'gentili' [...]; augmentatives [...]; diminutives [...]; superlatives, denominatives [...]; and 'verbali' [...]

[Padley 1988: 94–95].

We find this 'semantic [...] orientation' also in the *Miqneh Abram* [Balmes 1523: h1 v<sup>o</sup> / h2 r<sup>o</sup>.5 – h3 v<sup>o</sup> / h4 r<sup>o</sup>.15].

### 3. CONCLUDING REMARKS

As I have shown, there is a new direction in Hebrew grammar of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Profiat Durán, Ḥabib and Balmes are strongly influenced by Aristotle—probably via the Arabic versions of the works of the philosopher and the commentaries by the Arabic philosophers—but the original Greek texts are still recognizable in the work of these grammarians.

Although their approach was promising the production of grammars from the Judæo–Arabic tradition was dying out. In Balmes's grammar, which was meant for Christian scholars, we find a great synthesis of the Judæo–Arabic and Western grammatical traditions. Furthermore, we discern in Durán's and Balmes's grammars a tendency to reject the grammatical opinions of the Qimḥi's in favour of the points of view of the 'old grammarians', such as Ibn Ġânâḥ.

The last great grammars of the Judæo–Arabic tradition appeared in the sixteenth century and were written by Elia Levita. In the seventeenth century, the school–grammar *Ma'aneh Lašon* by the Amsterdam Rabbi Yišḥaq Uzziel was printed by Menasseh ben Israel (1627), which is probably the last Hebrew grammar of the Judæo–Arabic tradition <sup>10</sup>.

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## SUMMARY

In the history of Hebrew linguistics, the period after the *Quimh* is until the beginning of the sixteenth century has been called 'The Stand-still' (Barr & Tenne 1972: 1359). In this period many grammatical works were composed which are hardly discussed in detail by historiographers of Hebrew linguistics, but of which further study might show the qualification 'Stand-still' to be incorrect. In this paper, the author will treat some grammars from the fifteenth century of Jewish Hebrew linguistics and he investigates what its special features are. Then, the author discusses the grammar of Abraham ben Meir de Balmes which marks the transition of Hebrew linguistic scholarship from Jews to Christians around 1500 and indicates the connexions of these grammars with Antiquity and shows their new orientation of Aristotle's scientific principles, which they have in common with grammars of the Western tradition.

## SUMARIO

En la historia de la lingüística hebrea, el período desde el *Qimh* hasta inicios del siglo *xvi* ha sido denominado «The Stand-still» [el estancamiento] (Barr & Tenne 1972: 1359). Durante este período se compusieron muchas obras gramaticales, apenas discutidas en detalle por los historiógrafos de la lingüística hebrea, pero cuyo estudio más detenido demostraría que el calificativo de «estancamiento» no es correcto. En este artículo, el autor trata algunas gramáticas de lingüística hispano-hebrea del siglo *xv*, e investiga cuáles son sus rasgos característicos. A continuación, el autor discute la gramática de Abraham ben Meir de Balmes, que marca la transición de la erudición lingüística hebrea de los judíos a los cristianos, en torno a año 1500; indica la conexión de estas gramáticas con la Antigüedad; y muestra su nueva orientación hacia los principios científicos de Aristóteles, que comparten con las gramáticas de tradición occidental.