

‘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,