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MARCO DI GIULIO

In 1832, Samuel David Luzzatto (1800–1865) set out to write a new grammar of Hebrew; thirty-seven years would pass before its final fascicle appeared in print. In the meantime, his introduction to this long-awaited publication came out separately in 1836 as *Prolegomeni ad una grammatica ragionata della lingua ebraica* (Padua; henceforth *Prolegomeni*), which Luzzatto would come to think of as the *pièce de résistance* of his entire scholarly production.[1] Through *Prolegomeni*, Luzzatto sought to marginalize the role of Arabic—whose importance, he maintained, had been overestimated by the "father" of modern Semitic philology, Albert Schultens (1686–1750)—in his approach to illustrating the genius of Hebrew.[2] Searching for the language that would best explicate the workings of Hebrew, Luzzatto turned to Aramaic, which, according to one

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1. Luzzatto's *Prolegomeni ad una grammatica ragionata della lingua ebraica* has recently been translated into English by Aaron D. Rubin: Luzzatto, *Prolegomena to a Grammar of the Hebrew Language*, trans. A. D. Rubin (Piscataway, N.J., 2005). Unless otherwise specified, quotations from *Prolegomeni* will follow Rubin's translation. References to the original Italian pagination will be given in square brackets.

2. On Albert Schultens, see Johannes van den Berg, "The Leiden Professors of the Schultens Family and Their Contacts with British Scholars," in his *Religious Currents and Cross-Currents: Essays on Early Modern Protestantism and the Protestant Enlightenment*, ed. J. de Bruijn, P. Holtrop, and E. van der Wall (Leiden, 1999), 231–52; Stephen G. Burnett, "Later Christian Hebraists," in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation: From the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*, ed. M. Saebø (Göttingen, 2008), 2:792–95.

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strand of rabbinic tradition, was the language spoken by Adam.[3] Thus, even as Luzzatto gave full credence to tradition, he worked to obliterate alien features—that is, Arabic—from the historical treatment of Hebrew. Luzzatto's exertions demonstrated a prejudice against the use of the Arabic language to illuminate Hebrew, reflecting a position within Jewish scholarship that can be traced back to the Middle Ages.[4] In Luzzatto's case, his rejection of Arabic was part of a larger program to challenge what he saw as Christian control of a scholarly field that should have remained in Jewish hands.

Just before *Prolegomeni* was published, Luzzatto wrote a letter to Isacco Samuel Reggio (1784–1855), the foremost advocate of the cultural renewal of nineteenth-century Italian Judaism.[5] In this letter, Luzzatto gave a self-aggrandizing account of the making of his grammar, recalling how Reggio had introduced Luzzatto to the merits of *Ausführliches grammatisch-kritisches Lehrgebäude der hebräischen Sprache mit Vergleichung der verwandten Dialekte* (Leipzig, 1817; henceforth *Lehrgebäude*), a path-breaking exercise in Semitic linguistics authored by Christian Hebraist Heinrich Friedrich Wilhelm Gesenius (1786–1842) of Halle.[6] In Luzzatto's account, the encounter with *Lehrgebäude* took place on the occasion of an unplanned meeting at the synagogue of Gorizia in 1829. This encounter did more than provide Luzzatto with a rationale to engage in a new intellectual pursuit. It reenergized his Jewish pride and generated a competitive drive to join the scholarly fray:

> I, there in the synagogue of Gorizia, swore in my heart to surpass *Lehrgebäude* and not so much for personal honor as for national honor. It appeared to me an indignity that the glory, small or large, of the knowledge of the Hebrew language would have had to belong to an uncircumcised one.[7]

3. bSan 38b.

4. Irene E. Zwiep, *Mother of Reason and Revelation: A Short History of Medieval Jewish Linguistic Thought* (Amsterdam, 1997), 200–213.

5. Luzzatto to Reggio, September 2, 1836, *Epistolario italiano, francese, latino di Samuel David Luzzatto da Trieste pubblicato dai suoi figli* (Padua, 1890), no. 140, 207–9; henceforth *Epistolario*.

6. On Gesenius, see Rudolf Smend, *From Astruc to Zimmerli: Old Testament Scholarship in Three Centuries*, trans. M. Kohl (Tübingen, 2007), 57–75; John Rogerson, *Old Testament Criticism in the Nineteenth Century: England and Germany* (London, 1984), 50–57; Hans-Jürgen Zobel, *Altes Testament: Literatursammlung und Heilige Schrift: Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Entstehung, Geschichte, und Auslegung des Alten Testaments* (Berlin, 1993), 245–66.

7. Luzzatto to Reggio, September 2, 1836, *Epistolario*, no. 140, 208.

Although according to this account *Prolegomeni* was intended as a means to seize from Christians the honor of leadership in Hebrew studies and restore it to the Jews, Luzzatto never revealed his intentions in the work itself. *Prolegomeni* was presented as a purely scholarly venture. On the other hand, in letters, where Luzzatto was more explicit about the nationalistic purposes of *Prolegomeni*, he never mentioned his theory about the Aramaic origin of Hebrew and the methods he used to develop it. Seen in this light, Luzzatto's scheme to expunge Arabic from the historical-comparative accounts of Hebrew and replace it with Aramaic can be viewed as a strategy intended to overturn Christian scholarship by undermining its foundations. Luzzatto deemed it necessary to argue against Christian reconstructions of the history of the Hebrew language because he saw them as extensions of a critical form of rationalism that conflicted with the supernatural and ethical nature of Judaism. I suggest, therefore, that Luzzatto's linguistic research as epitomized in *Prolegomeni* should not be understood primarily as an intellectual endeavor but rather as an act of Jewish self-assertion. In his program, Luzzatto saw himself as advancing the Jewish nation while advancing beyond Gesenius.

In *Prolegomeni*, Luzzatto clearly advocated a program that was in line with his perspective on Jewish beliefs and practices, according to which Judaism, to keep its moral essence uncorrupted, required protection from the influences of universal rationalism. Luzzatto's well-known antithetical pairing of *Judaizmus* and *Atticizmus*, which encapsulated the tension in Western modernity between rationalism and supernaturalism, reflected the same position.[8] However, in *Prolegomeni* the stakes and methods were different: while his other major works were generally exegetical and theological studies of Jewish texts, here Luzzatto sought to guard Judaism from the influence of positivistic trends by focusing on the Hebrew lan-

8. In Luzzatto's historical perspective, while *Atticizmus* encouraged arid intellectualism, materialism, pursuit of self-fulfillment, and the insincere manipulation of sentiments, *Judaizmus* fostered emotion, ethical enthusiasm, truth, and a sense of justice. Similarly, *Atticizmus* ushered in philosophical consciousness, and *Judaizmus* invoked religious spirituality. On *Atticizmus* and *Judaizmus* in Luzzatto's thinking, see Israel Abrahams, "Samuel David Luzzatto as Exegete," *JQR* 57.2 (1966): 83–100; Michah Gottlieb, "Counter-Enlightenment in a Jewish Key: Anti-Maimonideanism in Nineteenth-Century Orthodoxy," in *The Cultures of Maimonideanism: New Approaches to the History of Jewish Thought*, ed. J. T. Robinson (Leiden, 2009), 264–69; Morris B. Margolies, *Samuel David Luzzatto: Traditionalist Scholar* (New York, 1979), 11–12, 14–15, 76–77, 194–97; Irene Kajon, "L'influenza di Francesco Soave sul concetto di ebraismo di Samuel David Luzzatto," in *Samuel David Luzzatto*, ed. R. Bonfil, I. Gottlieb, and H. Kasher (Jerusalem, 2004), 62–63.

guage itself. Luzzatto accorded Hebrew the highest value because it had the potential to serve as a direct link between the past and the present: it was both a medium through which the genius of its ancient speakers expressed itself, and a cohesive force in modern Jewish experience. Thus, the study of Hebrew grammar was not a mere philological exercise for Luzzatto but an endeavor charged with historical and national significance. Indeed, in Luzzatto's own assessment of his career, *Prolegomeni* stood out as his major intellectual effort, a perception that is at odds with the usual scholarly evaluation of Luzzatto's achievements.[9]

In the preface to *Prolegomeni*, Luzzatto claimed that the urge to write a new grammar of Hebrew came with the desire to emulate Gesenius's *Lehrgebäude*. However, Luzzatto maintained an ambivalent attitude toward his model. On the one hand, he praised Gesenius's pioneering achievements in the field of Oriental languages and worked to absorb the comparative methods of *Lehrgebäude*. On the other hand, Luzzatto's own wariness of rational systems of inquiry restrained him from fully embracing Gesenius's analytic framework, which was based on strictly empirical principles. Luzzatto believed that rationalism clashed with the supernatural foundations of Judaism, and that rational methods were insufficient to gain a full appreciation of the character of Hebrew. Such an appreciation required a special feel for the "genius" of the language that rationalists—and particularly gentiles—did not possess. This conflict between objective scholarship and a principled defense of the Jewish ethos led Luzzatto to a tension that remains unresolved in much of his oeuvre. In *Prolegomeni,* however, this tension proved particularly disruptive because it was further complicated by Luzzatto's conviction that the Jews had a natural affinity for the genius of Hebrew. Indeed, Luzzatto's reliance on the notion of the genius of Hebrew to demonstrate the close genetic linkage between Hebrew and Aramaic interfered with his stated intention to rely on empirical analysis and comparative methodology, resulting in contradictions that his critics were quick to identify.

Recent research has demonstrated how, beginning in the eighteenth century, tools for the study of Hebrew became a flourishing category of

9. Scholarship has largely focused on Luzzatto's engagement as a biblical philologist, on his theological stance as a response to the tension between tradition and modernity, and on his activity as an exegete. The few works treating the linguistic scholarship of Luzzatto concentrate on the details of his grammatical theory, disregarding the broader goals of his activity as a linguist. See, for example, Elia S. Artom, "S. D. L. grammatico, filologo e letterato," *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel* 8.7–8 (1933): 356–69, and Menachem Z. Kaddari, "Il linguista," *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel* 32.9–10 (1966): 138–62.

Jewish books.[10] In the nineteenth century some of these tools, though little appreciated in their time, mirrored the vision and sentiments of those among the Jewish elite who fostered the study of Hebrew as a vehicle to promote a new religious and national Jewish identity.[11] Luzzatto was deeply engaged in this study. His research into language carried cultural consequences because it entered contentious debates over the genealogy of languages, a focus of much academic discourse in the late nineteenth century. Thus, an examination of Luzzatto's labors in Hebrew grammar will show how the study of the language could be marshaled as an agent for national and religious self-definition at a time when Jewish historiography, with its nationalistic understanding of the past, was the main source for shaping modern Jewish identities. In what follows, I begin with a brief account of the emergence of the academic study of Semitic languages (Semitics), highlighting the relevant figures in Luzzatto's exposure to the empirical methods of linguistic inquiry. I then trace the development of Luzzatto's intention to reclaim Hebrew studies from his Christian counterparts. In particular, I stress Luzzatto's challenge to the view that Arabic was the key to unraveling the origins of Hebrew. Finally, I track the reception of *Prolegomeni*, revealing that Luzzatto, despite the failure of his targeted audience to respond to this work, remained undeterred in his efforts for the rest of his career.

I.

In making his debut as a grammarian in the first half of the nineteenth century, Luzzatto was entering a competitive arena. France and Italy were home to a handful of competent Hebraists, but the outstanding scholars were clustered in Germany. In the early nineteenth century, the commitment of German academe to comparativism was nearly absolute, although the methods employed at this early stage were somewhat unrefined. In Hebrew studies, it was Gesenius who raised inquiry to a level of unprecedented philological exactness through his comprehensive com-

10. The literature includes Irene E. Zwiep, "Imagined Speech Communities: Western Ashkenazi Multilingualism as Reflected in Eighteenth-Century Grammars of Hebrew," *Studia Rosenthaliana* 36 (2002–3): 77–117; Zwiep, "Hebrew 'Sociolinguistics,'" in *Studies in the History of Culture and Science: A Tribute to Gad Freudenthal*, ed. R. Fontaine et al. (Leiden, 2011), 453–69; Marco Di Giulio, "'There Is No Time More Pleasurable Than When I Converse in the Sacred Language': A Plan for the Revival of Spoken Hebrew in 19th-Century Italy," *Hebrew Studies* 53 (2012): 203–30; Andrea Schatz, *Sprache in der Zerstreuung: Die Säkularisierung des Hebräischen im 18. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 2009).

11. Di Giulio, "There Is No Time More Pleasurable."

parisons of Hebrew with its cognate languages. Without indulging in speculative interpretations, Gesenius practiced empirical methods through which he attained new insights into the fabric of Semitic languages by dint of hypotheses and their systematic verification. After issuing *Hebräische Grammatik* (Halle, 1813) and *Geschichte der hebräischen Sprache und Schrift* (Leipzig, 1815), Gesenius published *Lehrgebäude* in 1817, a work that would set Luzzatto on the path of comparative grammar some ten years later. In *Lehrgebäude*, Gesenius gave systematic form to the awareness that grammar and its various components did not remain unchanged over time. With unparalleled meticulousness, *Lehrgebäude* utilized comparative techniques to trace the historical evolution of Hebrew. Unlike other contemporary scholars, Gesenius was more interested in defining the nature of genetic relationships between Semitic languages than in reconstructing a hypothetical language family tree. In its minimal attention to the historical relationships between languages, Gesenius's methodological framework sidestepped the questions that would occupy Luzzatto.

In the preface to *Lehrgebäude*, Gesenius brought home a major point. Comparisons of Semitic languages had proved invaluable in illustrating the Hebrew lexicon, but they had not been utilized enough for explorations of Hebrew grammar.[12] If any language had greater advantage over the others, Gesenius continued, it was Arabic because it preserved a rich and archaic template for illustrating the mechanics of Hebrew grammar. But in the body of the work Gesenius accorded Arabic no more weight than he did to the other Semitic languages. His discussion of the linguistic material was objective and balanced. To be sure, Gesenius was mindful that abuse of Arabic had already led some Hebraists into error. In *Lehrgebäude*, Gesenius seized the opportunity to take Schultens to task for having set forth extravagant and ill-founded Hebrew etymologies based on Arabic.[13]

The Christian Hebraist Albert Schultens, professor of Oriental languages in Leiden, did pioneering work in Semitic philology. At the core of his comparative approach was the conviction that a fuller picture of Hebrew could be restored only through the use of cognate languages, given that the Hebrew Bible, with its limited collection of books, offered but a fragmentary representation of Hebrew grammar. However, Schultens's skill as a grammarian was not matched by the methodological soundness of his comparative approach to lexicon. Because of his overrel-

12. *Lehrgebäude*, vi.
13. Ibid., 194.

iance on Arabic, he often reached far-fetched conclusions in his attempts to shed light on Hebrew vocabulary. But Schultens pushed his reasoning even further. In his *Oratio de linguae Arabicae de antiquissima origine intima ac sororia cum lingua Hebraea affinitate* (Franeker, 1729), he mapped linguistic arguments onto the genealogy of languages, holding that Arabic retained the purest and most archaic template for the Semitic languages—a conclusion that vexed Luzzatto.

In 1829 Luzzatto finished reading Gesenius's *Lehrgebäude* with mixed feelings. Impressed by the work's evident erudition yet wary of a number of analyses in it, Luzzatto wrote a letter to Reggio—on whose recommendation he had bought the work[14]—containing a pointed critique. Even if Luzzatto was driven by a genuine desire to appropriate scholarly methods that were new to the Jews—as he stressed in the letter—his characterization of *Lehrgebäude* was reductive. Luzzatto presented *Lehrgebäude* as a grammar that explained Hebrew through the lens of Arabic, obscuring the fact that Gesenius had drawn on the whole spectrum of Semitic languages known at the time. In Luzzatto's opinion, *Lehrgebäude* was supposed to show how the "treasures" of the Arabic language could benefit the "Jewish philologist," but Gesenius's attempt to restore the original pronunciation of Hebrew through Arabic seemed to Luzzatto anything but satisfactory. In the letter's closing, Luzzatto said bluntly that although *Lehrgebäude* had "blazed a new path," much work had still to be done for "the clarity and solidity of science." This comment foreshadowed Luzzatto's decision to engage in the venture that would culminate seven years later in the publication of *Prolegomeni*. The letter, in short, anticipated Luzzatto's treatment of Gesenius as a straw man in his campaign against the Arabicizers of Hebrew.

Shortly before taking on the professorship at the rabbinical seminary in Padua in 1829, Luzzatto delved into the study of Syriac and began to learn Arabic. Barely capable of reading Arabic, Luzzatto admitted that he lacked sufficient motivation to move beyond the basics of this language.[15] Moreover, the burden of shaping a new curriculum at the seminary left him with little leisure to learn a new language. In an 1856 letter to Eugenia Pavia Gentilomo (1822–93), Luzzatto would attribute his rudimentary grasp of Arabic to his decision to avoid the study of Semitic languages whose genius did not resemble that of Hebrew. He saw exposure to such languages as a menace to his natural "feel" for Hebrew. Presumably less preoccupied with finding a space in the assembly of Ori-

14. Luzzatto to Reggio, June 10, 1829, *Epistolario*, no. 48, 82–84.

15. Luzzatto to Saul Formiggini, April 14, 1829, *Epistolario*, no. 45, 80.

entalists at this later stage, Luzzatto wrote to Pavia Gentilomo with little restraint:

> Besides Hebrew, I have no knowledge of Oriental languages other than Chaldaic and Syriac. I have very little knowledge of Arabic . . . Born to interpret the Bible, I refrained from familiarizing myself with languages too divergent from Hebrew, so that I would not lose the feel for Hebrew and could penetrate the soul of the biblical authors.[16]

Luzzatto may have inherited his attitude toward Arabic from medieval Jewish tradition. While a number of grammarians considered Arabic a valuable source in comparative lexical analyses, some Jewish authors, Profiat Duran (d. ca. 1414) among them, thought that comparisons with Arabic—perceived as an adulterated form of Hebrew—jeopardized the holiness of Hebrew.[17] Although Luzzatto does not speak of adulteration, he was convinced that the genius of Hebrew and the genius of Arabic were irreconcilable. Such a conviction is incompatible with comparative methodology and goes a long way toward explaining Luzzatto's failure to master the new language.

Luzzatto's prejudice against Arabic was reinforced by an aversion to rationalism and its practitioners, who—whether Christian or Jewish—had drawn close to the intellectual world of Arab civilization. From Luzzatto's perspective, mastery of Arabic had served Schultens as a philological weapon to attack the authority of Scripture. In a similar vein, Arabic philosophy, imbued as it was with Greek rationalism, had inspired Jewish philosophers and exegetes such as Moses Maimonides (1135–1204) and Abraham Ibn Ezra (1089–1164) to shake the supernatural foundations of Judaism through application of rational modes of inquiry to Scripture. As Luzzatto confessed to his son Filosseno (1829–54) in an 1852 letter, a dislike of Maimonidean rationalism had prevented him from reading the *Guide of the Perplexed* in his youth.[18] If he had chosen to study Maimonides' text, he wrote in the letter, he would have learned Arabic.

II.

Luzzatto was by no means an inexperienced linguist. With an array of essays in Hebrew language journals to his credit, he had earned the repute of a premier scholar among European maskilim for his investiga-

16. Luzzatto to Pavia Gentilomo, June 17, 1856, *Epistolario*, no. 553, 856.
17. Irene E. Zwiep, *Mother of Reason and Revelation*, 200–213.
18. Luzzatto to Filosseno Luzzatto, May 9, 1852, *Epistolario*, no. 406, 680.

tions of Hebrew synonyms.[19] Luzzatto never received formal training in linguistics, but his ideas on language were grounded in the philosophical speculations of theorists such as Francis Bacon (1561–1626), Giambattista Vico (1668–1744), and Étienne Bonnot de Condillac (1715–80).[20] From Enlightenment language theories Luzzatto absorbed the notion that every language was characterized by a distinct genius. Accordingly, languages were regarded as the repository of the cultural heritage of nations insofar as they bore the imprint of the history and character of the communities that spoke them. While this concept gave Luzzatto a conceptual framework for his Hebrew grammar, it also prevented him from coming to terms with comparativism.

Prolegomeni was published in 1836. Designed as an introduction to *Grammatica della lingua ebraica*, which would be issued in installments from 1853 to 1869, *Prolegomeni* comprised an outline of Hebrew linguistic scholarship by both Jews and Christians, a history of the Hebrew language, a treatment of the fundamental laws of the grammatical formation of words in Hebrew and Aramaic, and six appendices dealing with Hebrew pointing and accentuation. Reviewing both recent attainments and time-honored controversies, *Prolegomeni* addressed aspects of Hebrew linguistics that were still intensely debated. However, as Luzzatto averred in the preface, the goal of *Prolegomeni* was to amend the ill-conceived system of analyzing Hebrew grammar in light of Arabic that had been popularized by Schultens and embraced by Gesenius. To this end, he worked to prove that Aramaic, and not Arabic, was the parent language of Hebrew.[21]

Phonetics offered Luzzatto the key to recovering the ancient Hebrew

19. Margolies, *Samuel David Luzzatto*, 125–28.

20. Details about Luzzatto's early education and literary interests are provided in S. D. Luzzatto, *Autobiografia di S. D. Luzzatto preceduta da alcune notizie storico-letterarie sulla famiglia Luzzatto a datare dal secolo decimosesto e susseguita da varie appendici* (Padua, 1882).

21. The church fathers and Jewish sages first suggested that Aramaic was the parent language of Hebrew (Walter Baumgartner, "Was wir heute von der hebräischen Sprache und ihrer Geschichte wissen," *Anthropos* 35–36 [1940/1941]: 593). Later attempts sought to reconstruct the genealogy of languages with Aramaic as the source language (Umberto Eco, *The Search for the Perfect Language*, trans. J. Fentress [Oxford, 1995], 95–96). The subgrouping of Semitic languages has been debated since the eighteenth century, but consensus about genetic kinships has never been reached. For an overview of the *status quaestionis*, see Aaron D. Rubin and John Huehnergard, "Phyla and Waves: Models of Classification of the Semitic Languages," in *The Semitic Languages: An International Handbook*, ed. S. Weninger et al. (Berlin, 2012), 259–78.

genius. Relying on categories such as "euphony," "perspicuity," and "brevity," he outlined the genetic ties binding Semitic languages. He made the case that while Aramaic, Hebrew, and Arabic all developed from a lost mother tongue, Aramaic was the direct progenitor of Hebrew.[22] Using lack of euphony as a measure of antiquity, Luzzatto maintained that Aramaic, marked as it was by hard and high-pitched sounds, was the most primitive of the Semitic languages. This conclusion was corroborated, or presumably predetermined, by rabbinic traditions that identified Adam as the first Aramaic speaker.[23] Hebrew, with its harmonious and soft cadences, was taken as an outgrowth of Aramaic. The "luxuriant," "rich," and "harmonious" linguistic patterns of Hebrew were a reflection of the inborn preference of its ancient speakers for "gentleness" of sound. At the end of the chronological sequence Luzzatto placed Arabic, with its exceedingly rich inventory of sounds and forms. Because he maintained that Arabic was younger than both Aramaic and Hebrew, he thought that Arabic could shed little light on the development of the other two languages.

By following this line of reasoning and relying on selective pieces of Jewish tradition, Luzzatto proposed a language tree that was overall in line with the conventional accounts. Luzzatto departed from the convention by grounding his historical reconstruction on aesthetic judgments. The introduction of such categories as "euphony," "perspicuity," and "brevity" is a case in point. In this framework, Luzzatto denied that Hebrew was the mother of all languages, thus distancing himself from a dogmatic position that would presumably have undermined the rational foundations of the approach he resolved to follow. At the same time, he defended a tradition within Judaism that maintained that Aramaic was the language of Adam.

To refute the theories of Schultens, Luzzatto centered his arguments on an alternative explanation of the morphological origins of segholate nouns.[24] To this end, he analyzed empirical data based on the assumption that the vowel composition of words expands as languages evolve. This postulate was at odds with the methods introduced by German scholars, for whom regular phonological correspondences across language were the basis for reconstructing linguistic changes. Thus, building on the per-

22. *Prolegomeni*, 93–115 [105–32].

23. Ibid., *74*, n. 1 [86, n. 2].

24. Ibid., 108–10 [125–26]; 138 [159]. Hebrew segholate nouns contain two syllables, the first of which is stressed (e.g., *kodeš*, *sefer*, *kelev*). On segholate nouns, see Paul Joüon and Takamitsu Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, 2 vols. (Rome, 1991; repr., with corrections, 1996), 293–301.

ception that Hebrew speech featured only tuneful and soft sounds, Luzzatto rejected Schultens's claim that segholates had developed from Arabic stems such as *gabr-*, which end with a consonant cluster. For Luzzatto, the latter type of stem was phonetically discordant with the mellifluous cadences of Hebrew.[25] In opposition to Schultens, Luzzatto speculated that Hebrew segholates derived from a stem with an initial consonant cluster, such as the Aramaic *gbar-*, whose enunciation was in line with the euphony he attributed to Hebrew. Yet Luzzatto's perception of the Arabic stem of *gabr-* as phonetically harsh conflicted with his own claim that Arabic exhibited the highest degree of harmoniousness. This contradiction—which Luzzatto failed to address—is an indication that he may have devised his explanation of the historical development of segholates to prop up his foregone conclusion about the priority of Aramaic. In any case, Luzzatto's attempt to challenge Schultens's analysis of segholates, which was taken up by Gesenius in *Lehrgebäude*, failed. The accumulation of linguistic data and the discovery of Semitic languages unknown in Luzzatto's time have since confirmed the accuracy of Schultens's analysis.[26]

Luzzatto's desire to protect the genius of Hebrew from perceived Christian mishandlings of its grammar, as well as his nationalist interpretation of linguistic theories, prevented him from adhering strictly to the rational and historical-comparative methodology that he announced in the preface of *Prolegomeni*. His belief that languages were associated with distinct national qualities limited his choice of languages that could valuably be compared to Hebrew, which meant that Arabic was according little weight, as a language both late and marked by characteristics he saw as incompatible with those of Hebrew and Aramaic. In his very determination to exclude Arabic from his analysis of Hebrew grammar, Luzzatto sabotaged his own attempt to develop a system that could supplant Gesenius's comparative model.

25. Luzzatto was even more explicit in his introduction to Profiat Duran's *Ma'aseh efod*: "According to this method [i.e., Schultens's], the ancient Hebrews would have enunciated many words whose pronunciation was very hard and almost impossible." Profiat Duran, *Maase Efod: Einleitung in das Studium und Grammatik der hebräischen Sprache von Profiat Duran, nebst einer Einleitung, erläuternden und kritischen Noten von den Herausgebern, und hebräischen Beilagen von dem Verfasser sowie von Prof. S. D. Luzzatto, zum ersten Male herausgegeben von Dr. Jonathan Friedländer und Jacob Kohn* (Hebrew; Vienna, 1865), 219. It is unclear, however, what made the pronunciation of *gabr-* harder.

26. Cf. Edward Lipiński, *The Semitic Languages: Outline of a Comparative Grammar* (Leuven, 1997), 210–11.

III.

The historical overview of Hebrew scholarship that opens *Prolegomeni* allows us to see Luzzatto's underlying motives.[27] From this thorough survey it is clear that scholars who placed too much confidence in the tools of the new philological "science" were targets. From Luzzatto's perspective, these scholars were responsible for having misconstrued the genius of Hebrew. Luzzatto rejected their attempts to explain away the vagaries of Hebrew grammar, arguing that grammar is not an aggregate of "inevitable and necessary" rules but rather a cluster of "moral laws" that reflect the "inclinations" of languages.[28]

In a chapter filled with biting remarks, Luzzatto dwelled at some length on Schultens, whom he described as "very learned but not equally philosophical and critical."[29] Besides misrepresenting the essence of Hebrew grammar, Luzzatto commented, Schultens had erred in making Arabic the privileged means of his philological recovery efforts. Schultens's own purpose in tapping into the realm of Arabic was to account for the universe of the Hebrew language, to which the exiguous biblical corpus represented only a partial testimony. But the Dutch scholar's dexterity in extracting data from Arabic to explain the quirks of Hebrew, Luzzatto noted, easily slipped into aberration. Not content to elucidate obscure Hebrew words comparatively, Schultens had the nerve to liken Arabic grammar to Hebrew grammar. It is hardly surprising that Luzzatto, who considered grammar to be the heartbeat of a language, thought that Schultens's method was doomed. In Luzzatto's view, Schultens had devised a flawed method that created but a "semblance of truth."

In comparing Hebrew and Arabic, Schultens by no means broke new ground. Some four centuries earlier, ancient Jewish grammarians had elucidated opaque words through comparison with Arabic.[30] Unlike Schultens, however, they did not presume to purge Hebrew of its anomalies, nor did they venture to assimilate its grammar to that of Arabic. Against this backdrop, Luzzatto shifted the discussion of Schultens's perceived shortcomings into an opportunity to reinstate the worth of the Jewish grammarians, whom Schultens had "enjoy[ed] ill-treating."[31] More intellectually honest than Schultens, they had understood what the Dutch Hebraist seemed to deny: languages, like people, naturally fol-

27. *Prolegomeni*, 5–64 [9–71].
28. Ibid., 93 [107].
29. Ibid., 43–45 [49–52].
30. Ibid., 44 [51].
31. Rubin translates as "ill-using" (*Prolegomena to a Grammar*, 44).

lowed their inclinations and at times resisted the organizing power of reason.

Whether to gain fresh insight into the Scriptures or a deeper appreciation of the spirit of Jewish literature, Luzzatto was persuaded that Christians turned to Hebrew almost out of compulsion and observed in the opening pages of *Prolegomeni* that Jews might understandably have felt "self-satisfaction" in seeing how the grace of their historical language had captivated the Christian imagination.[32] A sense of Jewish ownership characterized Luzzatto's posture toward Hebrew. More so than *Prolegomeni*, Luzzatto's letters were filled with allusions to Jews' intimate relationship with Hebrew.[33] This relationship gave them a special and instinctive aptitude for penetrating the depths of the language with little mediation of intellect. No matter how much study and knowledge Gesenius applied, Luzzatto would insinuate in an 1865 letter to Fürchtegott Lebrecht (1800–1876), he was unable to understand "the logic of Hebrew" because he "did not have the palate" nor "the heart" for it.[34] Nor did Gesenius have an ear for the harmonious stress patterns of Hebrew, as Luzzatto seems to suggest in a footnote in *Prolegomeni* in the course of picking apart his analysis of consonantal structure.[35]

Apart his stated desire in the preface of *Prolegomeni* to rectify Gesenius's errors, Luzzatto did not single him out for special criticism in the body of the book. Luzzatto's main charge against Gesenius concerned his analysis of segholate nouns, which was modeled on that of Schultens; on the whole, however, he referenced him profusely and approvingly. It was mainly in letters that Luzzatto defined Gesenius as a "fanatic" Arabist in the style of Schultens, and revealed his desire to reclaim Hebrew scholarship from him.[36] The short treatment of Gesenius in the historical overview of *Prolegomeni* was instead restrained and measured.[37] Fear of violating the norms of scholarly decorum may have kept Luzzatto from publically expressing his frank opinion of the master Hebraist of Halle.

In addition to Gesenius, another leading scholar was mentioned in *Prolegomeni*: Heinrich Ewald, one of the seven founders of the Deutsche

32. *Prolegomeni*, 4 [6].

33. See, for example, Luzzatto to Moisè Coen Porto, April 2, 1855, ed. E. Gräber, *S. D. Luzzatto's hebräische Briefe*, 9 vols. in 2 (Hebrew; Przemysl, 1882–94; henceforth *Hebräische Briefe*), no. 576, 1253; Luzzatto to Heinrich Graetz, March 20, 1856, ibid., no. 593, 1282.

34. March 1, 1865, *Hebräische Briefe*, no. 687, 1417.

35. *Prolegomeni*, 107 [128].

36. Luzzatto to E. F. Magnus, September 10, 1863, *Epistolario*, no. 683, 1031.

37. *Prolegomeni*, 45–46 [53].

Morgenländische Gesellschaft in 1845.[38] As a professor of theology and Semitics in Göttingen and Tübingen, Ewald made profound contributions to the fields of biblical history, Arabic, Hebrew grammar, and Sanskrit. Luzzatto did not linger on Ewald's scholarship, nor did he cite him as often as he did Gesenius. He presented Ewald's *Kritische Grammatik der hebräischen Sprache* (Leipzig, 1827) as an "original labor, full of new ideas, all ingenious, varied, and sensible." However, he deferred to posterity the judgment of whether Ewald actually was the "founder of the science of the Hebrew language," as he had been labeled.[39] Whether or not Ewald took this as a slight, he would become Luzzatto's most severe critic.

Luzzatto conceived *Prolegomeni* in part as a trial balloon for testing scholarly reactions to his grammatical theory. The core of *Prolegomeni*, in which the theory of the Aramaic origin of Hebrew was encapsulated, was followed by an appendix on Hebrew pointing and accentuation. This appendix concluded the work and was presented in the form of objections and replies, an indication that Luzzatto may have anticipated confutations of theories still in need of refinement. However, it was the latter part of the book and the historical overview of Hebrew scholarship—a section Luzatto considered secondary to the core of his theory—that attracted the attention of critics and commentators.

IV.

Prolegomeni suffered a troubled fate. In Italy the volume inspired both controversy and approbation. Jewish conservative circles frowned upon the thesis of the priority of Aramaic because it challenged the sanctity of Hebrew,[40] while journal critics exalted the work without providing

38. On Ewald, see Lothar Perlitt, "Heinrich Ewald: Der Gelehrte in der Politik," in *Theologie in Göttingen: Eine Vorlesungsreihe*, ed. B. Moeller (Göttingen, 1987), 157–212; Rogerson, *Old Testament Criticism in the Nineteenth Century*, 91–103.

39. *Prolegomeni*, 47 [54].

40. In 1837, Samuel Vita Zelman (1808–85) of Trieste reported to Luzzatto the negative opinion of *Prolegomeni* among the Jews of his hometown: "I regret to tell you about the judgment that the Triestines made about it [i.e., *Prolegomeni*]. They do not understand a thing. Only our teacher, I believe, reads it with pleasure and surprise and extols it immensely. He reads it as if it were a classical work. I tell you that I would have preferred if you had dodged the objections of the Orthodox so as to ease the conscience of those who think, almost dogmatically, of Hebrew as the original language and work of God. I think you [did dodge the objections of the Orthodox], but without caring enough about the delicacy of these foolish people." Zelman to Luzzatto, March 2, 1837, Archivio Shadal 3755, Centro Bibliografico dell'Unione delle Comunità Ebraiche Italiane of Rome (hereafter CB). In a letter to Isaac Markus Jost, Luzzatto confirmed

detailed assessment.[41] Outside Italy, *Prolegomeni* was greeted with indifference or skepticism. Practitioners of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, who were mapping out fields outside biblical studies, proved unreceptive to Luzzatto's work. When Jewish scholars commented on *Prolegomeni*, they largely ignored Luzzatto's theory about the primacy of Aramaic, which Luzzatto had developed to reclaim intellectual supremacy from Schultens and "his followers," and addressed instead only his outline of Hebrew grammars and his remarks on pointing.[42] Christian Germans, who stood at the forefront of biblical scholarship, challenged Luzzatto on different accounts, ranging from claims that he was unfamiliar with linguistic theory to assertions of methodological unsoundness. Their attacks on the foundations of Luzzatto's work ironically mirrored his own ambition to demolish the theoretical foundations of Christians.

Luzzatto approached individual scholars to gain their support but did not receive the positive response for which he had hoped.[43] Because his colleagues outside Italy were more often historians and literary critics of Judaism than Hebrew linguists, and because *Prolegomeni* was written in Italian, the volume failed to find a broad audience. He regretted that no copies of *Prolegomeni* were sold in Ashkenaz and sought the assistance of peers in disseminating the book locally.[44] In his effort to popularize *Prolegomeni*, Luzzatto also reached out to Hungarian maskil Salomon Rosenthal (1763–1845) of Pest:

> I am sending you the introduction to *Prolegomeni*, which I have just published, and you will see how I have reclaimed the honor of the

this account. Luzzatto to Jost, July 8, 1840, *Epistolario*, no. 221, 367. A German translation of this letter also appeared in *Israelitische Annalen*, August 14, 1840, 279–80; August 21, 1840, 288–89; August 28, 1840, 296–97.

41. See Saul Formiggini, review of *Prolegomeni ad una grammatica ragionata della lingua ebraica*, by S. D. Luzzatto, *La Favilla*, May 7, 1837, 3–4; unsigned review of *Prolegomeni di* [*sic*] *una gramatica* [*sic*] *ragionata della lingua ebraica*, by S. D. Luzzatto, *Biblioteca Italiana* 22 (July–September 1837): 18–28; unsigned review of *Prolegomeni ad una grammatica ragionata della lingua ebraica*, by S. D. Luzzatto, *La Fama*, September 25, 1837, 457.

42. Cf. Luzzatto to M. Letteris, July 11, 1838, *Hebräische Briefe*, no. 203, 478.

43. Luzzatto sent copies of *Prolegomeni* to Samuel Leib Goldenberg, Nachman Krochmal, and J. L. Rapoport (*Hebräische Briefe*, 376); to Julius Fürst (*Hebräische Briefe*, 396); to Jacob Auerbach, Leopold Zunz, Abraham Geiger, and I. M. Jost (*Hebräische Briefe*, 398, 417); and to Meir Letteris (*Hebräische Briefe*, 478).

44. See Luzzatto to M. Letteris, October 31, 1837, *Hebräische Briefe*, no. 173, 400; Luzzatto to Leopold Zunz, December 14, 1838, ibid., no. 226, 577; Luzzatto to S. L. Goldenberg, March 19, 1839, ibid., no. 237, 598.

> sages of our nation, and how I escape subservience to the sages of the nations [i.e., Christians] and blind trust in them, how I wished to confront the eminent grammarians of the nations and destroy the foundations of their constructions. I hope you agree with me that in order to gain honor before the nations, it is useless to point out others' errors and look for shortcomings in their books without proposing correct and valuable things . . . as I have done in this book that I am giving you today.[45]

The tone of the letter makes clear that Luzzatto thought Rosenthal a sympathetic addressee likely to appreciate the nationalistic purpose of his work. Without detailing what "correct and valuable things" he had to offer, Luzzatto stated only his motives. But *Prolegomeni* did not impress Rosenthal. The Hungarian was more interested in, and critical of, Luzzatto's notorious anti-Maimonidean stance. In a pamphlet titled *Bet owen* (n.p., 1839), Rosenthal attacked Luzzatto for his rejection of Maimonidean rationalism; there is no evidence that he responded to the core argument of *Prolegomeni*.

Even Luzzatto's long-standing correspondent Solomon Jehuda Leib Rapoport (1790–1867) of Prague treated *Prolegomeni* with a mixture of condescension and indulgence.[46] Though he solicited his opinion several times, Luzzatto only received Rapoport's evaluation of *Prolegomeni* in 1838, more than two years after he had sent him the book. The latter offered a few measured words of appreciation on Luzzatto's history of Hebrew grammars and his discussion of the vowel signs.[47] This must have disheartened Luzzatto, especially since in 1836 he had emphasized to Rapoport that his theory about the origins of Hebrew pointing was a secondary feature of *Prolegomeni*, and that the main purpose of the book was "to reveal that the labor of Schultens, Michaelis, and later grammarians . . . [wa]s in vain."[48] Back then, however, Rapoport had only acknowledged that the Jews had long straggled behind the Christians

45. Luzzatto to Rosenthal, January 26, 1837, *Hebräische Briefe*, no. 145, 369.

46. On the epistolary relationship between Rapoport and Luzzatto, see Shmuel Werses, "Shadal and Shir: Luzzatto and Rappaport through Their Letters" (Hebrew), in *Samuel David Luzzatto*, ed. R. Bonfil et al., 79–98; Isaac Barzilay, *Shlomo Yehudah Rapoport [Shir] (1790–1867) and His Contemporaries: Some Aspects of Jewish Scholarship of the Nineteenth Century* (Ramat Gan, 1969), 101–6.

47. Rapoport to Luzzatto, December 4, 1838, *S. L. Rappoport's hebräische Briefe an S. D. Luzzatto (1833–1860)*, ed. E. Gräber, 4 vols. (Hebrew; Przemysl, 1885–86), no. 12, 105.

48. Luzzatto to Rapoport, April 7, 1836, *Hebräische Briefe*, no. 122, 330.

and that "the time had come that a learned Jewish man wrote an introduction to the Hebrew language."[49] Rapoport's tactful response implied that well before he read *Prolegomeni* he did not expect that Luzzatto's research would advance Jewish scholarship.

In his tireless promotion of *Prolegomeni*, Luzzatto went so far as to approach Gesenius himself. Although Luzzatto would claim much later that his own "sentiment for the Hebrew language repelled the interpretations and the readings of this great Orientalist," he set great store by the Halle professor's judgment.[50] In 1837, about a year after the appearance of *Prolegomeni*, Luzzatto sent Gesenius a copy of his volume along with a deferential letter penned in Latin.[51] In the letter, Luzzatto emphasized the intellectual debt he owed his addressee as he tactfully warned him of their scholarly disagreements. In so doing, he advised Gesenius that *Prolegomeni* contained the "thoughts of his admirer" and that his respect for Gesenius, "even if he deviated from [his] opinions not rarely, [was] not at all diminished." In closing his missive, Luzzatto called Gesenius a "unique man" and wished him a "long life and eternal glory."

It is unknown what Gesenius thought of *Prolegomeni* or if he replied to its author personally, but the Halle professor certainly valued Luzzatto's learning. In advertising *Prolegomeni*, *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums* informed its readers that at some earlier date Gesenius had named Luzzatto the "best Orientalist in Italy."[52] Luzzatto was incredulous when he learned of Gesenius's comment from Meir Letteris (1800–1871) in Pressburg and responded, "Until I see this page with my own eyes, my heart will suspect that honey and flattery are under your tongue."[53] Once Luzzatto read the announcement of *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, he apologized to Letteris for his distrust and wondered in which journal Gesenius could possibly have lauded him.[54]

Gesenius did not write a review of *Prolegomeni*. Rather, Friedrich August Arnold (1812–69)—a student of Gesenius and later professor of Semitic languages and Arabic in Halle—produced a report on the book for *Allgemeine Literatur Zeitung*.[55] As a member of the journal's editorial

49. Rapoport to Luzzatto, May 5, 1836, no. 10, *S. L. Rappoport's hebräische Briefe*, 105.

50. Luzzatto to Albert Cohn, October 2, 1856, *Epistolario*, n. 560, 862.

51. Luzzatto to Gesenius, April 16, 1837, *Epistolario*, n. 150, 223–224.

52. *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, October 19, 1837, 344.

53. Luzzatto to M. Letteris, March 6, 1838, *Hebräische Briefe,* no. 187, 416.

54. Luzzatto to Letteris, March 11, 1838, *Hebräische Briefe*, no. 188, 417.

55. I wish to thank Stefan Schorch and Johannes Thon for identifying F. A. Arnold as the author of this review. [Friedrich August Arnold], review of *Prolego-*

board, Gesenius perhaps restrained himself from discussing a work that called into question his own expertise.[56] At the same time, however, Arnold may have been privy to Gesenius's thoughts about *Prolegomeni*. Regardless of whether Arnold based his review on Gesenius's opinions, he revealed professional integrity by underscoring both the merits and faults of Luzzatto's research.

Arnold took on the task of acquainting Germans with Luzzatto's book in part by translating extensive sections of *Prolegomeni*. Although he made favorable observations about Luzzatto's overview of linguistic scholarship, Gesenius's protégé focused mainly on the book's methodological limitations, homing in on the theoretical framework that Luzzatto had articulated to support his thesis about the primacy of Aramaic. Arnold argued that the analysis of Hebrew vis-à-vis Aramaic was methodologically flawed and did not follow from the theory Luzzatto himself had developed. Through a swift discussion of the evidence provided by Luzzatto, Arnold showed that the principles at the core of Luzzatto's theory were lacking in descriptive power. To Arnold, Luzzatto's thesis, which was largely based on a comparison between the syllabic and vocalic composition of words in Aramaic and Hebrew, looked like an expedient that Luzzatto thought up to validate his theory about the primacy of Aramaic. As a result, Arnold continued, Luzzatto had to "layer hypothesis upon hypothesis to keep his system upright."[57] Without taking a position on the current views of language genealogy, Arnold tore asunder the theory that Aramaic was the progenitor of Hebrew. Arnold, like Gesenius, never established a historical family tree of Semitic languages. Furthermore, and more important, he pointed out that Gesenius, contrary to what Luzzatto claimed, never shared the pan-Arabist tendencies of the Dutch school of Semitic philology.

Arnold did not direct his attention solely to philological minutiae. He also remarked on Luzzatto's struggle to harmonize his linguistic theory with the revealed dimension of the Torah. Committed to the rationalist claims of his mentor, Arnold flatly rejected Mosaic authorship of the

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meni ad una grammatica ragionata della lingua ebraica, by S. D. Luzzatto, *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*, April 1838, 529–36; April 1838, 537–40. On Arnold, see Philipp Wolff, "Arnold, Friedrich August," *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* (1st ed.; Leipzig, 1875), 1:586; and Wilhelm Schrader, *Geschichte der Friedrichs-Universität zu Halle*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1894), 2:278.

56. On the policies and ethical commitment of *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*, see Joan Leopold, *The Letter Liveth: The Life, Work and Library of August Friedrich Pott (1802–87)* (Amsterdam, 1983), lxvii.

57. [Arnold], review of *Prolegomeni*, *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*, 535.

Torah, which Luzzatto defended on a linguistic basis in a footnote in chapter 70. "That this orthodox idea stands on weak ground should be known by everybody," observed Arnold.[58] Luzzatto, of course, was not given the opportunity to respond. The footnote that provoked Arnold's disapproval, however, had already addressed the arguments against of the Mosaic authorship of the Torah, anticipating the dismissive allegation of the reviewer of Halle: "To perceive the frivolousness of the arguments of those people who deny the antiquity of the Pentateuch, I would be tempted to think that the true origin of their obstinacy was the fear of having to admit both divine Revelation and supernatural miracles."[59]

Ewald had reviewed *Prolegomeni* a year before his younger colleague from Halle. Ewald was well qualified to assess *Prolegomeni*: he had written two grammars of Hebrew and one of Arabic, in addition to a spate of essays in Oriental philology that constituted cutting-edge research in their day. In 1837, he commented on Luzzatto's book in *Göttingiſche gelehrte Anzeigen*, a journal published under the aegis of the Göttingen Academy of Sciences.[60] With uncompromising bluntness, Ewald outlined the strengths and flaws of Luzzatto's work. He acknowledged that the acquisition of Hebrew at an early age placed Luzzatto in a better position than that of the non-Jewish Italian Hebraists—a comment that almost lent credence to the view that Jews had an edge in the study of Hebrew, as Luzzatto believed. Luzzatto's familiarity with the advances of German scholars also met the favor of the distinguished critic. These assets, however, were overshadowed by what Ewald saw as the intrinsic shortcomings of *Prolegomeni*.

In the first place, Ewald picked up on Luzzatto's use of the word "rational" in the full title of *Prolegomeni*. Ewald did not make the point of his polemic explicit. However, he suggested that the label "rational," in line with a widespread trend, was employed in the title of *Prolegomeni* to lure buyers but did not reflect the actual approach of Luzzatto. He then argued that Luzzatto's poor grasp of linguistic theory and insufficient command of Semitic languages, particularly Syriac and Arabic, undermined the book's conclusions. Unlike Arnold, however, Ewald did not support this critique with evidence. He simply rebuffed the claim that Aramaic was the root of Hebrew. Only six years earlier, Ewald had main-

58. Ibid., 534.

59. *Prolegomeni*, 79, n. 1 [90, n. 1].

60. Heinrich Ewald, review of *Prolegomeni ad una grammatica ragionata della lingua ebraica*, by S. D. Luzzatto, *Göttingiſche gelehrte Anzeigen*, August 19, 1837, 1317–19.

tained in the introduction to his Arabic grammar that Arabic, though given written form at a later stage, conserved the features of an archaic Semitic language, and therefore its investigation was key to a proper understanding of Hebrew.[61] The difference in views on the genetic link between Arabic and Hebrew may have given Ewald a good reason to disparage Luzzatto. However, a prejudice against Jewish scholarly practices seemed to fuel Ewald's acrimony. He generalized Luzzatto's limitations to the whole category of modern Jewish biblical scholars: "It is striking to see how modern Jews who want to make a name for themselves as biblical scholars almost without exception fear Arabic and also Syriac. They torture themselves with their bad Hebrew and miserable Aramaic, and they see this as a badge of honor."[62] Even though Ewald recognized Luzzatto's early acquisition of Hebrew as an advantage, he seems to have believed that traditional Jewish education in Bible and Talmud diminished one's capacity for sound Semitic philological research. After condemning the baseless pride of the Jews who probe their historical languages, Ewald nonetheless concluded his piece by acknowledging the worth of Luzzatto's illustrations of Hebrew pointing.

Ewald was well known for his ad hominem attacks. Among the savants who found themselves the target of his tirades were Wilhelm L. M. de Wette (1780–1849), Hermann C. K. Hupfeld (1796–1866), Franz Delitzsch (1813–90), and Ferdinand Hitzig (1807–75), to list just those in the Christian sector. He had, sometime previously, infamously dismissed Gesenius's grammar, claiming that it was "still completely unscientific and useless, superficial, inadequate and erroneous, whereas anything true that [was] to be found in it was for the most part only borrowed from my [i.e., Ewald's] writings."[63] Not only did Ewald's pronouncements embitter the last stretch of Gesenius's life, they also struck Luzzatto as irritating and unjustifiable. In 1857, fifteen years after Gesenius died, Luzzatto noted, "I hate [Ewald] because of the insults he spouted out against Gesenius after his death and because he hypocritically boasts of believing while he undermines the principles of the revelation."[64]

If this derision of Gesenius's grammar exemplified Ewald's general proclivity to demonize his rivals, the critique of *Prolegomeni* illuminated his specific anti-Jewish prejudice.[65] Ewald's unsympathetic criticism of

61. Heinrich Ewald, *Grammatica critica linguae Arabicae*, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1831), iii–vi.

62. Ewald, review of *Prolegomeni*, 1318–19.

63. Quoted in Smend, *From Astruc to Zimmerli*, 72.

64. Luzzatto to M. A. Levy, November 10, 1857, *Epistolario*, no. 597, 926.

65. The anti-Jewish undertone of German biblical scholarship has been discussed in James Pasto, "Islam's 'Strange Secret Sharer': Orientalism, Judaism,

Luzzatto was followed by others leveled at such leaders of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* as Abraham Geiger (1810–74), Zacharias Frankel (1801–75), and Solomon Munk (1803–67).[66] Whether Luzzatto read Ewald's review of *Prolegomeni* or not, he was well aware of the Göttingen professor's biases. Much later, in a reply to Heinrich Graetz (1817–91), Luzzatto confessed that he had refrained from using Ewald's writings to pen his own commentary on the book of Isaiah not only because of exegetical disagreements but also because of Ewald's hatred of the Jews.[67]

V.

As of 1843, the grammar to which *Prolegomeni* served as an introduction remained unpublished. In that year, Luzzatto notified Michael Sachs (1808–64) in Prague, "Many pressure me to put out soon the grammar that I announced seven years ago."[68] What catalyzed Luzzatto to finish this work was the announcement of the incurable illness of his firstborn son, Filosseno, a promising scholar in his own right,[69] a tragedy that motivated him to begin the publication process of the grammar he had promised in 1836. Encouraged by Filosseno in the last year of his life, Luzzatto interrupted his research into medieval Jewish literature, an enterprise that had been solicited by German scholars, and channeled all his energies into the completion of his unfinished projects.[70] "I believe that finishing my commentary on the book of Isaiah and the grammar is more useful to the nation than illustrating the verses of the Middle Ages that are abstruse at times," he would write to Moritz Steinschneider (1816–1907) two years after the loss of Filosseno.[71]

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and the Jewish Question," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 40.3 (1998): 437–74.

66. See Ismar Schorsch, "Converging Cognates: The Intersection of Jewish and Islamic Studies in Nineteenth-Century Germany," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 55.1 (2010): 24–26; Schorsch, "Leopold Zunz on the Hebrew Bible," *JQR* 102.3 (2012): 432; Elliott Horowitz, "'A Jew of the Old Type': Neubauer as Cataloguer, Critic, and Necrologist," *JQR* 100.4 (2010): 654; and Susannah Heschel, *Abraham Geiger and the Jewish Jesus* (Chicago, 1998), 191–94.

67. Luzzatto to Graetz, January 25, 1856, *Hebräische Briefe*, no. 599, 1273.

68. Luzzatto to Sachs, November 30, 1843, *Hebräische Briefe*, no. 340, 826.

69. On Filosseno Luzzatto, see Sabato Morais, *Italian Hebrew Literature* (New York, 1926), 153–70.

70. See Luzzatto to Giuseppe Levi, February 27, 1854, *Epistolario*, no. 488, 771–72; Luzzatto to Moritz Steinschneider, March 1, 1854, ibid., no. 489, 772–73; Luzzatto to A. Geiger, March 2, 1854, ibid., no. 490, 773–74; and Luzzatto to Giuseppe Lattes, March 12, 1854, ibid., no. 491, 774–77.

71. Luzzatto to Steinschneider, December 8, 1856, *Epistolario*, no. 566, 878.

The first fascicle of *Grammatica della lingua ebraica* came out in 1853, shortly before Filosseno died.[72] The discussions in this work revolved around the specifics of grammatical theory, leaving little room for the attacks on Schultens and "his followers" that punctuated *Prolegomeni*. In the same year, prior to the first fascicle's publication, the pedagogue Angelo Paggi (1789–1867) voiced a plea in *L'Educatore Israelita*, the first widely read Italian journal to specialize in Jewish culture and society: "The above praised Luzzatto with his most erudite *Prolegomeni* published in Padua in 1836 made us expect a grammar, which, judging upon the same *Prolegomeni*, would cater to our shared desires; but it has not yet appeared, and the need for this work is felt by everybody."[73] In 1854, the same journal hailed the first fascicle as an "extremely precious gift from the productive author of *Prolegomeni*" and as the "most profound and reasoned [grammar] to appear thus far" and advised the Jewish educators of the peninsula to adopt it.[74]

In contrast to this Italian enthusiasm for the grammar, Ewald, writing in Germany, took the opportunity to disparage Luzzatto's practices once again in a review in *Jahrbücher der biblischen Wissenschaft*. Similar to his rant against *Prolegomeni* nineteen years earlier, Ewald's exposition listed the weaknesses of the first fascicle and noted as well the impossibility for modern Jews to "secure access to a fruitful and scientific understanding of Hebrew."[75] With a blend of sarcasm and self-satisfaction, Ewald also remarked that the label "rational" had disappeared from the title of the grammar but Luzzatto's overall approach did not offer signs of methodological improvement. Moisè Levi Ehrenreich (1819–99), an alumnus of the Rabbinical Seminary of Padua and the chief rabbi of Modena at the time, sent Ewald's critique to Luzzatto with this note: "Here is the requested copy of Ewald's article about your grammar. Truthfully, I made it with rage because the spirit in which it is written represents an excess of impudence and insolence."[76] No evidence proves that Luzzatto

72. Seven installments of the grammar came out from 1853 to 1869. See Isaia Luzzatto, *Catalogo ragionato degli scritti sparsi di Samuele Davide Luzzatto con riferimenti agli altri suoi scritti editi ed inediti* (Padua, 1881), 480.

73. Angelo Paggi, "Sull'insegnamento elementare della lingua sacra," *L'Educatore Israelita* 1 (1853): 275.

74. "Grammatica della lingua ebraica," *L'Educatore Israelita* 2 (1854): 24.

75. Ewald, review of *Grammatica della lingua ebraica*, by S. D. Luzzatto, *Jahrbücher der biblischen Wissenschaft* 7 (1854–55): 109–12.

76. Ehrenreich to Luzzatto, Modena, [month unknown] 29, 1856, Archivio Shadal 2179, CB. On M. L. Ehrenreich, see "Brief aus Italien," *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums* 64.2 (1900): 20–21.

took umbrage at Ewald's review. However, it is noteworthy that, writing to Fausto Lasinio (1831–1914) of Florence in the same year, Luzzatto unwaveringly expressed negative opinions of Ewald's Hebrew grammar, which he defined as a "gallimaufry."[77]

As the fascicles of his grammar appeared, Luzzatto remained preoccupied with *Prolegomeni*. With this work, he had resolved to introduce a polemic into the study of language in order to challenge the scholarship of "foreigners"—that is, of Christian Germans. Despite his goals, however, it was the historical and bibliographical parts of *Prolegomeni*, rather than the thesis devised against Schultens and Gesenius, that evoked appreciation. Long after its publication, Luzzatto still complained to his correspondents about those who misjudged the "system" he had founded with *Prolegomeni*.[78] The indifference to his "new ideas," Luzzatto believed, was due to prejudice and lack of understanding. "It seems that the century has fallen into skepticism, and does not care, or does not feel capable of judging systems, but contents itself to learn the names of authors and books," Luzzatto wrote to Steinschneider in 1859, unburdening himself of his disappointment.[79]

Prolegomeni was intended as a vehicle for entering into discussion with "foreigners," Christians, and Germans, who—with the exception of Ewald and Arnold—showed scant interest in such a conversation.[80] Jews, similarly, paid little attention to the arguments made in *Prolegomeni*. Therefore, Luzzatto used other channels to highlight the significance of his oeuvre. For the first edition of Jonah Ibn Janaḥ's *Sefer harikma*, Luzzatto prepared a critical introduction in the form of a missive to one of its editors, Raphaël Kirchheim (1804–89).[81] The venue was highly symbolic:

77. Luzzatto to Lasinio, October 12, 1855, *Epistolario*, no. 530, 828.

78. Cf. Luzzatto to Steinschneider, March 9, 1853, *Hebräische Briefe*, no. 533, 1189; Luzzatto to Fausto Lasinio, April 13, 1863, *Epistolario*, no. 676, 1020. Earlier still, Luzzatto wrote to L. Zunz, "It has been more than four years since I published that book [i.e., *Prolegomeni*], on which I worked intensely and through which I lay the foundations for the Hebrew language. No one has done this before me." Luzzatto to Zunz, April 1, 1841, *Hebräische Briefe*, no. 298, 735.

79. Luzzatto to Steinschneider, August 22, 1859, *Epistolario*, no. 613, 943.

80. In particular, see Luzzatto to Lasinio, April 13, 1863, *Epistolario*, no. 676, 1020.

81. Jonah Ibn Janaḥ, *Sefer harikma: Grammaire hébraïque de Jona ben Gannach (Aboul-Walîd Merwan Ibn-Djanah) traduite de l'arabe en hébreu par Jehuda Ibn Tabbon; Publiée pour la 1ère fois d'après les deux manuscrits de la bibl. impériale de Paris par B. Goldberg; Revue et corrigée par Raphaël Kirchheim* (Frankfurt, 1856). On *Sefer harikma*, see Dan Becker, "Linguistic Rules and Definitions in Ibn Janah's 'Kitab al-Luma' (Sefer ha-Riqmah) Copied from the Arab Grammarians," *JQR* 86.3–4 (1996): 275–98.

one of the earliest and most sophisticated treatises on Hebrew grammar, *Sefer ḥarikma* was penned by a Jew who had assimilated Greek and Arab philosophy in medieval Spain. In providing his commentary to this treatise, Luzzatto did not pass up a chance to restate that "the sages of the nations from Schultens to Gesenius believed they were correcting the science of our language but they actually ruined it."[82]

However, the crucial section of Luzzatto's missive to Kirchheim did not find its way into *Sefer ḥarikma*.[83] In this omitted section, Luzzatto related Janaḥ's modus operandi to the present. The meticulous research of Janaḥ, Luzzatto observed, would have been called *Wissenschaft* in nineteenth-century Germany (most likely he was using the term to refer to both Jewish and non-Jewish scholarship). But a science superior to *Wissenschaft*, he maintained, was one that explored the metaphysical truths of the "divine bequest" (*naḥalat shaday*).[84] Sustained by a moral power, the practitioner of this latter form of knowledge could discriminate between the real and the apparent "without showing favor for the opinions of the contemporary generation and without envisioning advantage or glory."[85] By contrasting German *Wissenschaft* with what he saw as a supernatural and authentic form of Judaic science, Luzzatto sought to highlight the supremacy of the latter over the former. In this dichotomy, *Wissenschaft* took up the traits of Greek *Atticizmus*, which was for Luzzatto the cause of the Jews' estrangement from the authentic spirit of their religion. To Luzzatto, the emphasis that *Wissenschaft* placed on rationalism resulted in "pedantry," a notion irreconcilable with a Judaic philosophy that valued sentiment and heart.[86]

Maintaining faith in the use of Arabic for exegetical purposes was a corollary of foreign scholarly practices. This corollary concerned Luzzatto as much as it fascinated the Jews who espoused the wisdom of the "foreigners." When Senior Sachs (1815–92) commended Christians in the journal *Kerem ḥemed* for illuminating the Hebrew Scriptures, Luzzatto broke off his friendship with him.[87] He later asked Sachs,

> What is the great light that the sages of the nations in this generation have shed on the understanding of the holy books? If you refer to the

82. Janaḥ, *Sefer ḥarikma*, 206.

83. The letter to Kirchheim was published in full in *Hebräische Briefe*. See Luzzatto to Kirchheim, November 16, 1855, *Hebräische Briefe*, no. 558, 1262–71.

84. Ibid., 1270.

85. Ibid.

86. Luzzatto to Michael Sachs, May 8, 1846, *Hebräische Briefe*, no. 150, 977.

87. Senior Sachs, "Kol kore'! 'over be-minḥa ha-'ivrim," *Kerem Ḥemed* 8 (1854): 213–20, esp. 217.

> study of Arabic and other ancient languages, or the study of anthropology, none of this is new. The sages of the nations have studied both for about 300 years, and have shed light on few words and questions of the biblical books.[88]

However, Luzzatto launched his sharpest reprimand against the teachings of the foreigners and their misuse of Arabic in the last year of his life. Invited to contribute an introduction to the first edition of Profiat Duran's *Ma'aseh efod*, another major grammatical treatise on the Hebrew language of 1403, Luzzatto determined to summarize most of the arguments presented in *Prolegomeni*.[89] In so doing, he hoped to reach Jews who jeopardized Judaism by exchanging tradition for foreign wisdom. In a passage addressed to himself, Luzzatto provided a rationale for developing this polemical yet theoretical introductory essay to *Ma'aseh efod*:

> You wrote your grammar in Italian, and as you have not completed its publication yet, most of your innovations will remain unknown to the majority of Jews who do not know the language of your land. As a result, all youngsters who want to perfect their knowledge of the Hebrew language turn to foreign books and are pleased with them, drinking from their words. They move farther and farther away from the knowledge of the Hebrew language and err by seeing the Arabic language as critical, a view that the sages of the nations have promulgated since the time of Schultens. There are countless corrupted commentaries on the holy books that Jews have written after learning a little Arabic and accepting Gesenius's and his friends' argument that Arabic was key to the understanding of Hebrew.[90]

In a few lines, Luzzatto condensed the motives that had stimulated his research since the fortuitous encounter in Gorizia in 1829. In that circumstance at the local synagogue, Reggio presumably failed to anticipate the impact that his praise for Gesenius's *Lehrgebäude* would have on Luzzatto's scholarly career. With his Jewish pride reinvigorated by exposure to Gesenius's erudition, Luzzatto embarked on an intellectual venture to remap the kinship of Semitic languages. Building upon Enlightenment language theories, he concluded that Aramaic was the most archaic

88. Luzzatto to Sachs, August 5, 1862, *Hebräische Briefe*, no. 666, 1391. In the same letter Luzzatto alludes to his breach with Sachs eight years later.

89. Luzzatto, "Mikhtav gadol 'al yesode dikduk," in Duran, *Ma'aseh efod*, 211–21.

90. Ibid., 212.

Semitic tongue, thus corroborating the talmudic argument holding that Adam spoke Aramaic. In this account, Luzzatto treated Hebrew as an offshoot of Aramaic. Because the primacy of Aramaic had roots in rabbinical sources, Luzzatto felt that his theory posed no threat to the claims of revelation.

In grappling with language genealogies, Luzzatto labored to understate the affinity between Hebrew and Arabic that, in his view, had been overemphasized by Schultens and Gesenius. Besides sheer linguistic considerations, Luzzatto perceived Arabic as an instrument in the hands of Christian relativists that imperiled the tenets of Judaism. What is more, Luzzatto associated Arabic with the language of rationalists at large. In his view, those who approached revelation with the aid of reason, making Arabic the banner of their mission, unsettled Judaism as much as those Jews who (like Maimonides and Abraham Ibn Ezra) appropriated the rationalism of Greek or Islamic philosophy. Advising Jews not to become engrossed in foreign critical knowledge, Luzzatto admonished Steinschneider not to "glorify and flaunt those Jews whose being was not truly Jewish but Greek or Arabic."[91] Instead, Luzzatto advocated the grounding of knowledge in the wisdom of the Jewish sages.

Luzzatto's campaign to recapture the throne of Hebrew studies from Christians never made a major impression in his time. Yet when *Wissenschaft des Judentums* was introduced in Palestine in the early twentieth century, the words of Luzzatto resonated with those who were reshaping the image of Hebrew. This time, the discussions moved well beyond theoretical issues of language relationship. In the debate over the expansion of the Hebrew vocabulary that Eliezer Ben-Yehuda (1858–1922) promoted at the Hebrew Language Committee (*Va'ad ha-lashon ha-'ivrit*) in Jerusalem in 1912, Eliezer Meir Lipschuetz (1879–1946), an influential advocate of the full rejuvenation of Hebrew, made the case that lexical borrowings from Arabic should be banned because Arabic mirrored a society and ethos profoundly alien to Hebrew.[92] In so doing, he explicitly invoked Luzzatto, who, in a different land and century, had striven to keep those two languages and their values, histories, and scholars distinct from one another. In a phonetic complement to Lipschuetz's rejection of

91. Luzzatto to Steinschneider, June 18, 1847, *Hebräische Briefe*, no. 420, 1031. The English translation of this passage is quoted from Ismar Schorsch, "The Myth of Sephardic Supremacy," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 34.1 (1989): 65–66.

92. Avihai Shivtiel, "Languages in Contact: The Contribution of the Arabic Language to the Revival of Hebrew," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 30.1 (1985): 98–99. On Lipschuetz, see "Lipschuetz, Eliezer Meir," *Encyclopedia Judaica* (2nd ed.; Detroit, 2007), 13:72.

the Arabic lexicon, Vladimir Jabotinsky (1880–1940), another champion of the revival of Hebrew, argued that the modern language should not be pronounced like Arabic because the ancient Hebrews had been far distant in customs and mentality from the populations of the Arabian peninsula.[93] Unlike Lipschuetz, Jabotinsky did not build on Luzzatto's arguments. It is all the more surprising, therefore, that he considered the Italian language—Luzzatto's true mother tongue—to be the model of pure pronunciation that Hebrew should have emulated.

93. Vladimir Jabotinsky, *Ha-mivta' ha-'ivri* (Tel Aviv, 1930).