

## ABSTRACT

**Title:** “For those who want to speak Hebrew and not just chant it”:  
*Spinoza’s Compendium of the Hebrew Language*

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The dominant perception of Hebrew as “the language of God/Scripture” or as “the holy language” (traditionally established as such), hindered its systematic grammatical study within the scope of scientific inquiry. However, from the Middle Ages to the modern times, there were many notable scholars that approached the Hebrew language with grammatical and philological thoroughness. One such example is Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677), who, despite his reputation as a philosopher, could also be considered a talented philologist.

The purpose of this paper is to shed light on the philosopher’s Hebrew grammar book, *Compendium Grammatices Linguae Hebraeae* (1677). The text encountered a poor reception, both in the early modern period and in the centuries that followed, and it served as a central core for my doctoral research. More precisely, I completed the first Romanian translation of the book from its original Latin text.

Throughout this paper, I aim to provide an exposition of the compendium, emphasizing its distinctive features compared to other Hebrew grammars of that time. While a considerable number of scholars relates the *Compendium* to Spinoza’s philosophy (particularly to his well-known *Ethics*), I argue that the compendium is a genuine Hebrew grammar book, lacking in metaphysical content. Moreover, I shift from the conventional portrayal of Spinoza as *philosopher* and I draw the reader’s attention to Spinoza as *grammarian*.

A central question in the secondary literature examining Spinoza’s compendium deals with the motivation behind his decision to compose a grammar. One possible answer lies in the prefatory note preceding the compendium, which reveals his pedagogical intentions; the note reads that the book was written for his (somewhat mysterious) confidantes, who were “deeply preoccupied with the study of Hebrew language”. Equally significant is the examination of the status of Hebrew grammar books in the Low Countries during the 17th century.