Reshaping a Sacred Language through Intertextuality:

Baruch Spinoza’s New Ratio and the Rationalization of Hebrew

The aim of the project would be to offer a new reading of Spinoza’s Hebrew Grammar. Through an analysis of not only the grammatical rules written in Latin, but also the choice of words, the examples Spinoza uses in Hebrew in this text reveal the role of the intertext to reshape Hebrew and rationalize it. One may then ask what defines, or what are the boundaries of, language: is it the syntax, semantics, phonology and morphology of its words? There is a coherence between the words chosen as examples and the rules of the grammar. Using Hebrew is not only illustrative; it is also demonstrative. If Spinoza uses words that belong to other layers of the language that would mean that he is indeed the first to produce a grammar not only of biblical Hebrew but of Hebrew as a whole. This marginalized grammar, which for non-Hebrew speakers is difficult to access, could be a key to understanding and interpreting central concepts of the Spinozian system.