From the late sixteenth to the early eighteenth centuries, the educational and pedagogical theories of the French humanist Petrus Ramus (Pierre de la Ramée, 1515–1572) dominated secondary school and university education in Northern Europe, in England, Holland, and, especially, Germany. While Ramus's ideas were not themselves especially original or profound, they ignited a movement in liberal arts education that subsided in Europe only in the eighteenth century, long after they had ceased to have any influence on working scientists and thinkers. The first European encyclopedias were written under the influence of Ramism, and "Ramist textbooks were a runaway printing and teaching success: traces of Ramist habits of mind have been found in the works of contemporary figures as diverse as Francis Bacon and the Pléiade poets." Ramism went even further afield, for the Italian kabbalist and intellectual Rabbi Moses Ḥayyim Luzzatto (henceforth: Ramḥal) wrote textbooks on various subjects that show strong signs of Ramism—to such an extent that it is only a little exaggeration to view him as a Jewish Ramist. One of these epitomes, the Logic (Sefer ha-Higgayon, Amsterdam, 1742), is nothing but a condensed translation of a very popular sixteenth century “semi-Ramist” textbook, the Logicae institutiones tironum adolescentum of Marcus Wendelin (1584–1652). To his credit, Ramḥal acknowledges the Gentile origins of the book in his introduction,

1 On the latter, see H. Hotson, Commonplace Learning: Ramism and Its German Ramifications, 1543–1630 (Oxford, 2007).
When I saw the great need we have for this subject [i.e., Logic], without which we cannot enter into the scientific disciplines \( (\text{hokhmot}) \) and properly delight in their pleasure, I chose to arrange this subject in a condensed matter, according to what I felt necessary for a complete treatment. Most of it I translated from the books that preceded me in other languages, and I brought it to our language for the benefit of my coreligionists. I added, subtracted, and changed things as I saw fit.\(^4\)

Yet the extent of Ramḥal’s borrowing from Wendelin is not evident until both books are compared. To call the \textit{Logicae institutiones} one of several sources of the \textit{Logic} is an understatement; it is really the basis of most of the book. Ramḥal’s contribution is to abbreviate Wendelin’s lengthy discussions, and to adapt many of the examples for his Jewish audience.

Were Ramḥal merely to have condensed and translated into Hebrew a popular Latin logic textbook, the fact would be of interest only to a handful of specialists. After all, his fame rests on his introductory texts on kabbalah, ethics, and theology, some of which remain classics to this day.\(^5\) But Ramḥal’s aforementioned claim that logic is necessary for understanding the various scientific disciplines alerts us to the possibility of the influence of Ramist ideas on some of these other introductory texts. And, indeed, an examination of some of them reveals that they too, in varying degrees, should be considered Ramist textbooks.

All this raises interesting questions: How did Ramḥal, who spent much of his life in Italy, where Ramism was never very influential, learn about Ramist logic and methodology? How did he view the process of appropriation of non-Jewish texts, e.g., was he at all perturbed about the non-Jewish origin of his source? Given that he wrote a separate work on Talmudic method, what was the relation between the universal method of science and that of the Talmud? And since Ramist logic was by no means the only option in logic available to an early eighteenth century thinker, why did he appropriate that option?

Most of this paper attempts to establish the nature and extent of Ramḥal’s Ramism, beginning with his abridgement of Wendelin in the \textit{Logic} and to show the traces of Ramism in some of his other works. It concludes with a consideration of the present-day appropriation of Ramism by a group of Jewish traditionalists who are actively promoting Ramḥal’s

\(^4\) \textit{Sefer ha-Higgayon}, in D. Sackton, ed., \textit{Derekh ha-qodeš \ldots le-Ramḥal} (Jerusalem, 2005): 96–97. Subsequent references to the \textit{Logic} will be to this edition.