Introduction
to Hebrew Linguistics
('Inleiding Hebreeuwse Taalkunde')
UvA, Week 3, February 17, 2011

Tamás Biró

Valentine's day on Eisenbrauns

See:

http://www.eisenbrauns.com/pages/VDAY2011

Assignment for this week

1. Arie Schippers en Kees Versteegh. *Het Arabisch: Norm en realiteit.* Coutinho 1987. Pp. 11-27 (semitische talen, schrift)

2. John Huehnergard: 'Introduction'. In: John Kaltner and Steven L. McKenzie (eds.): *Beyond Babel: A Handbook for BH and Related Languages.* SBL 2002. Pp. 1-18.

Assignment: Find contradictions between the two articles.
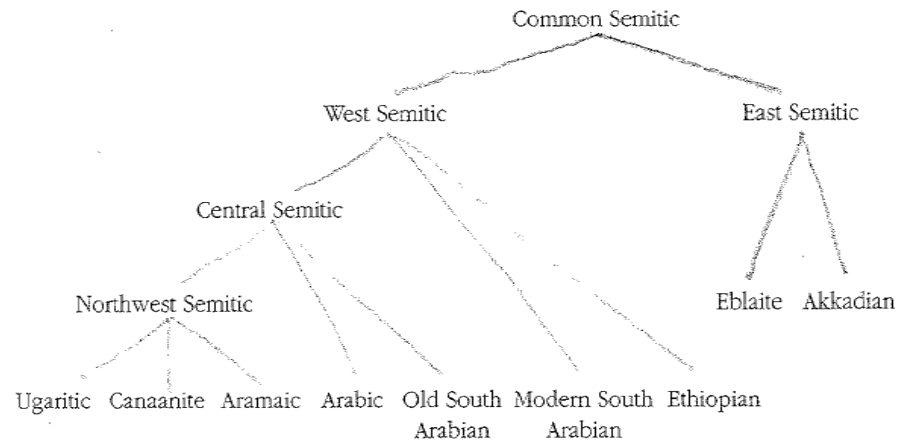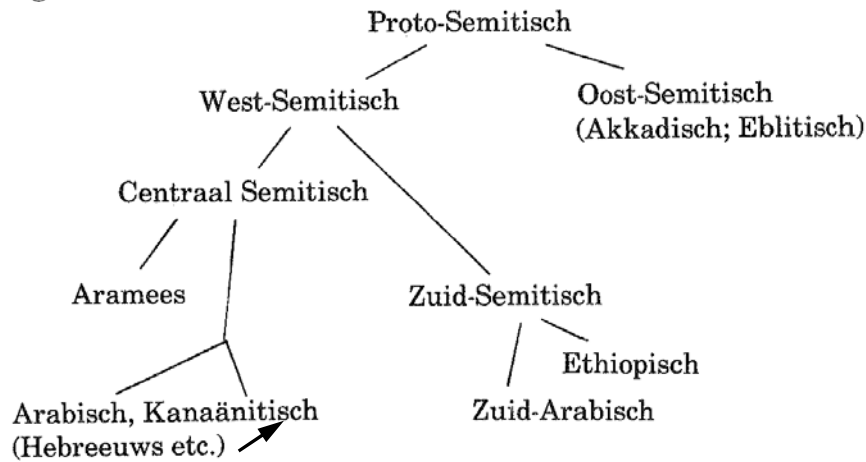

My goals have been:

(1) Make sure you read carefully and learn the chapters.

(2) Teach you to read critically: not to necessarily accept everything, since other opinions are also possible.

(3) Show that many opinions can be simultaneously around in science.

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Fig. 1

Hebrew: prehistory and four periods

0.   Proto-Semitic, proto-NW-Semitic
     proto-Canaanite, "proto-Hebrew"

1. Biblical Hebrew

     Pre-classical BH, classical BH, post-exilic BH; Qumran

     Masoretic Hebrew = Tiberian Hebrew

2. Mishnaic/Rabbinic Hebrew

3. Medieval Hebrew – dead or alive?

4. Modern Hebrew, Israeli Hebrew (Israeli language)

     Haskala, language revival, contemporary IH

End of week 2

The North-West Semitic languages

A language continuum?

The North-West Semitic languages

- Ugaritic: 2nd millennium BCE.

- Aramaic: 1st millennium BCE – today

  => Syriac: 1st millennium CE – (today: by Syriac churches)

- **Canaanite** lgs: since 2nd half of the 2nd millennium BCE

  - Tel el-Amarna glosses

  - Phoenician: 1st half of 1st millennium BCE

    Tyre, Sidon, Byblos: trade colonies (Mediterranean, Black Sea)

  => Punic: in *Carthage* (originally a colony of Tyre), 1st mill BCE in Western Mediterranean, North Africa, until late Roman times (Augustine)!

  - Hebrew: 1st millennium BCE – today

  - Ammonite, Edomite, Moabite: early 1st millennium BCE

Problems with the family tree model

- West-Semitic: Aramaic vs. Canaanite languages.

- Long debate: is Ugaritic a Canaanite language?

- Answers:

  1. Time: You cannot compare languages from different periods. Aramaic vs. Canaanite distinction in 1st millennium, whereas Ugaritic is a 2nd millennium language.

  2. Geography:
     - _dialect continuum_
     - isoglosses
     - Isoglosses may cross each other.
     - Waves of innovation: centre vs. periphery.
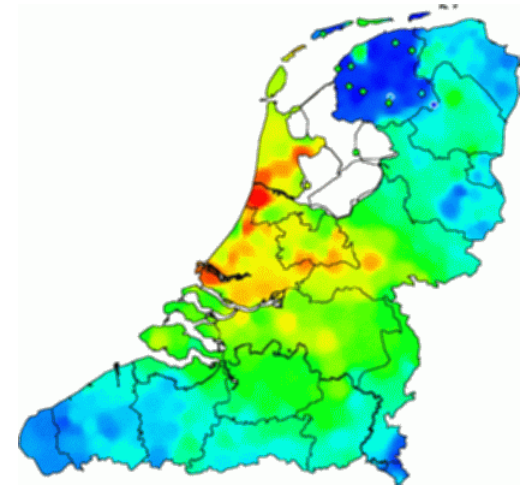
Dialect continuum

Dutch:

Gradual change:

What is a dialect?

Semi-arbitrary
dialect borders:

Center vs.
periphery:

(Source of the illustrations: Wilbert Heringa and John Nerbonne)

Isoglosses

Isogloss: geographical boundary of a linguistic feature (*isolex* for lexicon=word use, *isophone* for phonological=pronunciation difference, etc.). Crossing isoglosses.
Area between two isoglosses: where does it belong to?

Historischer Verlauf der Benrather und Speyerer Linie bis 1945

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Benrather_und_Speyerer_Linie.png

Source: http://nds-nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ofbeelding:Ik-ich-Isogloss_-_Uerdinger_Lien.svg

Family tree model vs. Wave model

Family Tree Model (August Schleicher: *Stammbaumtheorie*, 1860s):
- Biological analogy (Darwin). NB: Darwin influenced by linguistic analogy.
- Related languages originate from common ancestor:
    - different "tribes" migrating to different directions
    - "hard" geographic boundary (hill, river, political border) between "tribes"
    - language change (linguistic tree ≠ genetic tree)
    - Explains linguistic diversification, but not convergence.

Wave theory (Johannes Schmidt: *Wellentheorie*, 1872):
    - Dialect continuum; different languages in contact (cf. areal linguistics)
    - *Innovation* spreads from *center* in continuously weakening circles.
    - Peripheries (in all directions) not always reached by innovation: archaic features may survive in distant varieties of the language.
    - Can account for complex isogloss structures: different innovations arising in different centers, spreading in perpendicular directions, and reaching different distances.

Isoglosses for Semitic:

	Akkadian	*Ugaritic*	*Hebrew*	*Cl. Arabic*	*Ge'ez*
'king'	šarru(m)	malku	melex	malik	nəgūš
are there cases?	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
'build'	banū	bny	bānā	banā	nadaqa
'you, masc.'	attā	ʔattA	ʔattā	ʔanta	ʔanta
Past tense: morphology	prefixes	suffixes	suffixes	suffixes	suffixes
Dual: is there sg, du & pl?	Yes	Yes	No / not productive	Yes	No
Definite article	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes?

Which isogloss to use when drawing a "family tree"?
Take into consideration:

- Possible innovations/changes in more recent languages.

- Possible language contacts (with each other, with other languages).
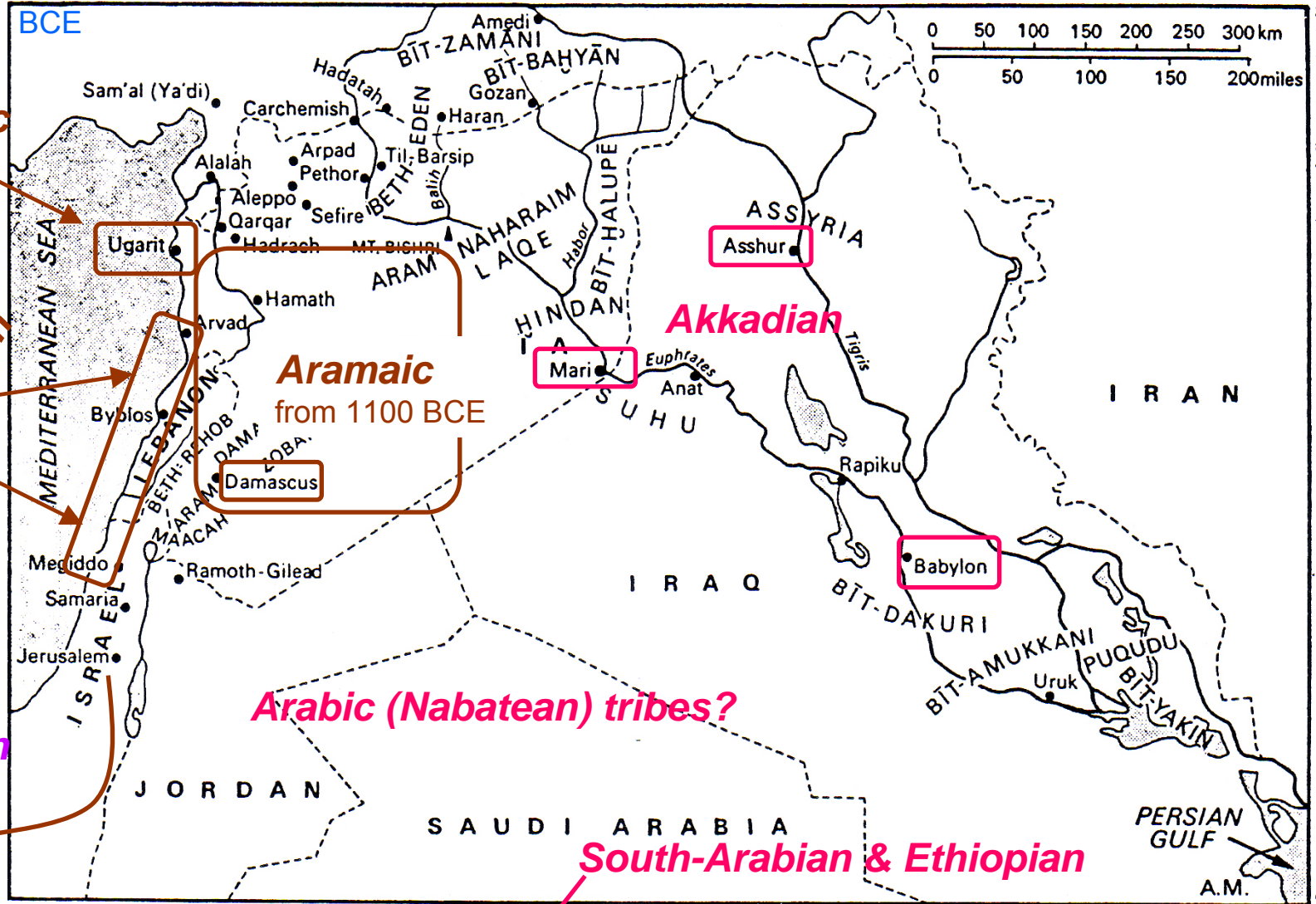
The West-Semitic language continuum

FIG. 4 The Aramaean cities and states.

The Tel el-Amarna letters

- Achetaton: new capital of Pharaoh Echnaton (Amenhotep IV), after his religious reforms, cca. 1350.

- 1887: discovery of >300 cuneiform tablets: diplomatic correspondence of Amenhotep III and Ekhnaton!

- Written in Akkadian, the lingua franca of that time.

- Some of them were sent by the kings of city states in Canaan to the Pharaoh: Canaanite variety of Akkadian,…

- but also including *glosses* in the Canaanite language:
  - Innovations: e.g., displaying Canaanite sound shift: [ā] > [ō]
  - Archaic, proto-semitic features: e.g., case system (3 cases)
  - Cuneiform: more on vowels, but questions on consonants.

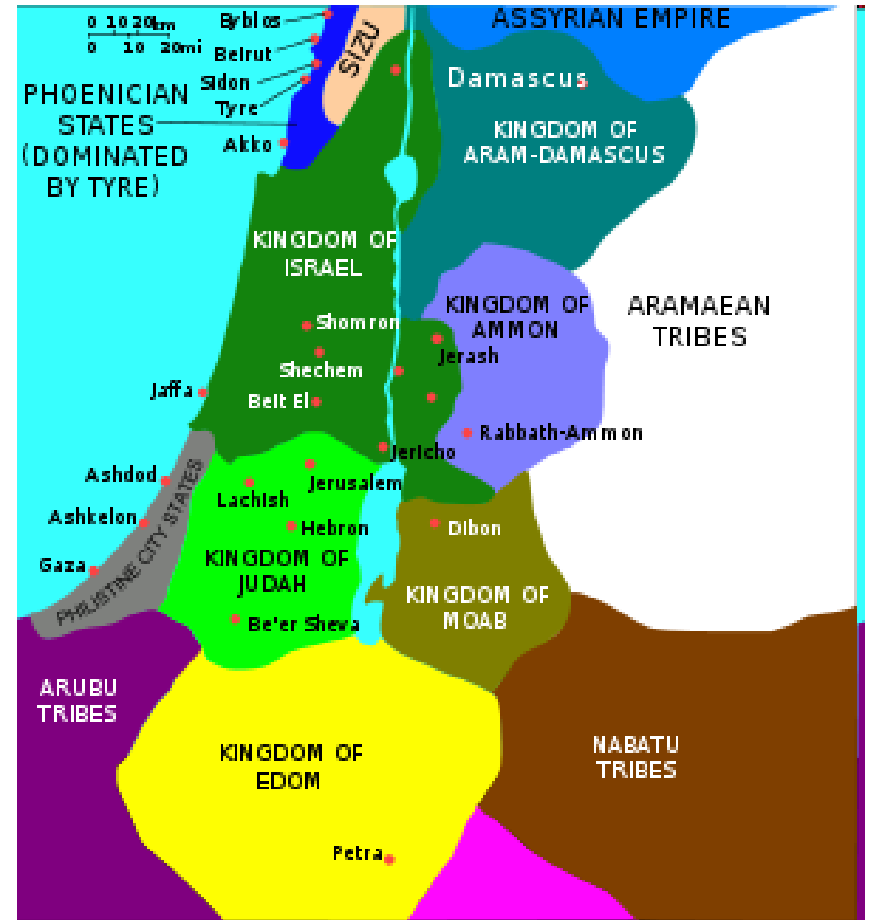- *More info: http://www.tau.ac.il/humanities/semitic/amarna.html.*

The West-Semitic language continuum

Soon after 1000 BCE:

- (<u>Ugaritic</u> not anymore, no Canaanite shift)

- (Philistine language? Indo-European?)

- <u>Aramaic</u> in Syria (no Canaanite shift)

- Canaanite sound shift [ā] > [ō]: <u>Phoenician</u> on the coast, and <u>Hebrew</u>: Northern and Southern dialects? (E.g., shibbolet/sibbolet?)

- Ammonite, Moabite, Edomite (etc?).

Most probably:

  - <u>spoken</u> dialect continuum
  - artificial <u>official/literary</u> language(s) in inscriptions.

Source: http://library.kiwix.org:4201/I/300px_Levant_830_svg.png

History of the alphabet

From pictograms
to a writing system

Fig. 2. Sumerian pictographic inscription

Fig. 3. Babylonian cuneiform text

Source: Joseph Naveh. *Early History of the Alphabet.* Magnes Press, 1987.

From pictograms to cuneiform and hieroglyphs

BIRD				
FISH				
DONKEY				
OX				
SUN				
GRAIN				
ORCHARD				
PLOUGH				
BOOMERANG				
FOOT				

- *Logograms* denote whole word.

Disambiguation:

- *Phonetic complements*: show last sounds of word.

- *Determinatives*: denote word class.

-*Syllabograms*

-Egyptian: also uniconsonantal signs.

Source: Joseph Naveh. *Early History of the Alphabet.* Magnes Press, 1987.

SIGN	TRANS-LITERATION	OBJECT DEPICTED
	ꜣ	Egyptian vulture
	i	flowering reed
(1) (2)	y	(1) two reed-flowers (2) oblique strokes
	ꜥ	forearm
	w	quail chick
	b	foot
	p	stool
	f	horned viper
	m	owl
	n	water
	r	mouth
	h	reed shelter in fields
	ḥ	wick of twisted flax
	ḫ	placenta (?)
	ẖ	animal's belly with teats
(1) (2)	s	(1) bolt (2) folded cloth
	š	pool
	ḳ	hill-slope
	k	basket with handle
	g	stand for jar
	t	loaf
	ṯ	tethering rope
	d	hand
	ḏ	snake

Alphabet:
the principle of acrophony

- Egyptian uniconsonantal signs.

- West-Semitic alphabet: *consonantal writing*.

- Proto-Canaanite script
  - cca. 1800 BCE: Wadi el-Hol??
  - 17-16th c BCE: Gezer, Nablus (Shechem), Lachish
  - approx. 1500 BCE: Proto-Sinaitic inscriptions (discovered by F. Petrie, 1905/06, West Semitic slaves in turquoise mines?)

Fig. 17. Albright's chart of letters in the Proto-Sinaitic inscriptions

West-Semitic consonantal writings based on the principle of acrophony

- <u>West-Semitic alphabet</u>: strongly influenced by Egyptian uniconsonantal signs?

- <u>Ugaritic script</u>:

  - Akkadian (language & script) was also used in Ugarit.

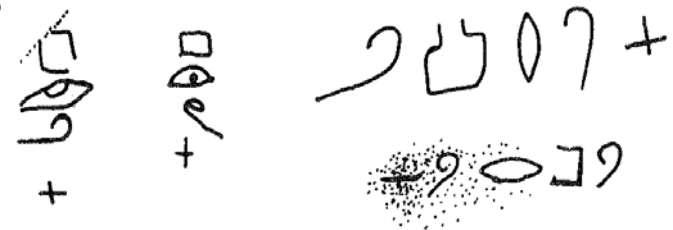 - Developed alphabet (27C + 3V), but based on cuneiform:

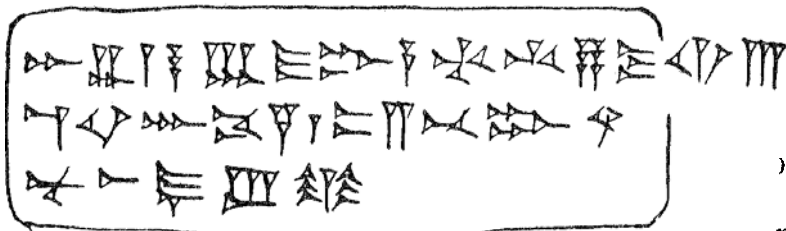Fig. 16. The word (l)b'lt in the Proto-Sinaitic inscriptions

ʾa b g ḫ d h w z ḥ ṭ y k š l
m ḏ n ẓ s ʿ p ṣ q r ṯ
ġ t ʾi ʾu s₂

Fig. 25. An abecedary from Ugarit

  - Abecedary from Ugarit: order had ritual importance?

Adopting a writing system
to another language

- Cuneiform: Sumerian => Akkadian => Ugaritic, Luwian, Hittite, Elamite, Persian, Tel el-Amarna glosses
- Hieroglyphic: Egyptian => Luwian, etc.
- Phoenician => Greek => Latin => English, Dutch, French, Maltese (= an Arabic dialect influenced by English and Italian) etc.
- Hebrew => Judeo-languages
- Arabic => Persian, Turkish. Cyrillic, etc. to many languages

Problems arising:
- Different phonological system: new sounds not present in the source language. Dutch: ch, sj… Hebrew: shin/sin (ayin/rayin?)
- Traditions borrowed together with the writing system that do not make sense in the new language: Hebrew spelling in Yiddish, Sumerian logograms in Akkadian.
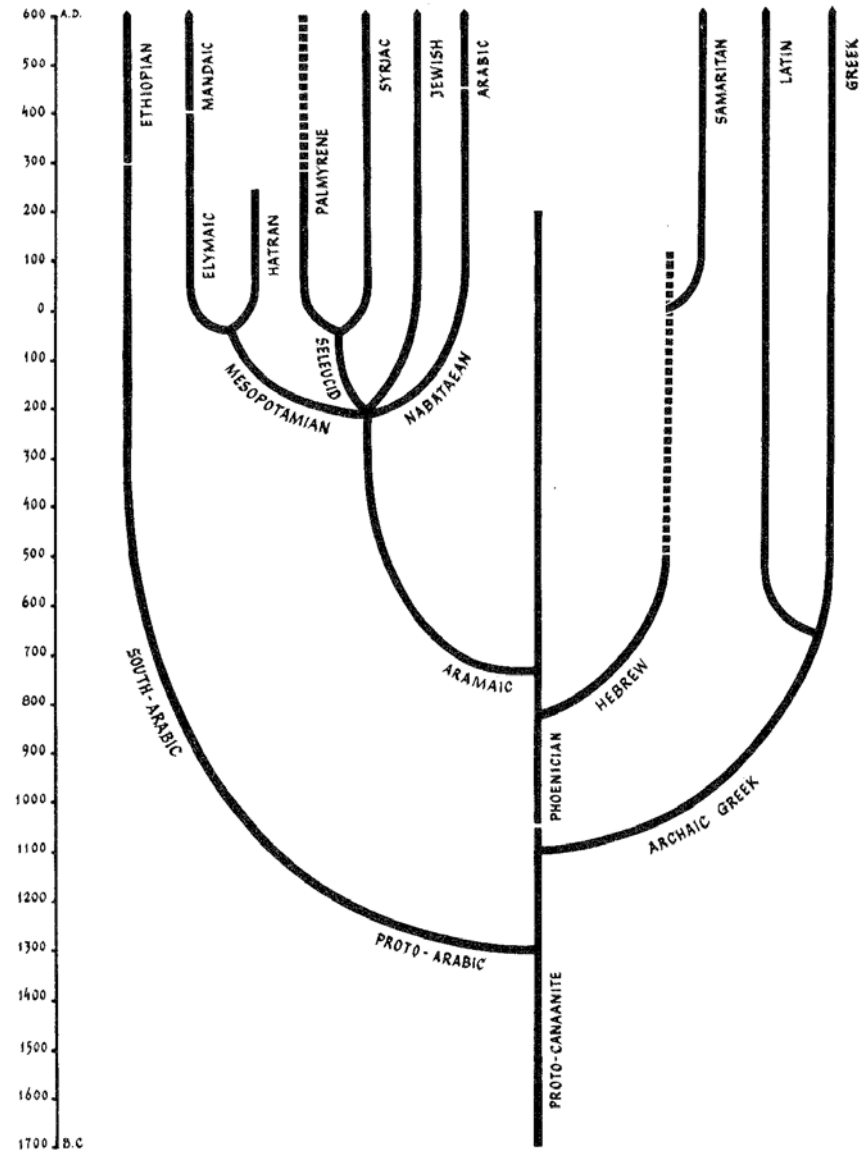
Further history of the Alphabet

End of 2nd millennium: reduction

of the number of letters.

South-Arabian => Ethiopian

Phoenician, developed into:

- Punic

- Greek => Latin,Coptic, Cyrillic...

- Paleo-Hebrew => Samaritan

- Aramaic =>

    - Jewish

    - Syriac

    - Nabataean, Palmyrene => Arabic; India, Central Asia

Jewish scripts

אבגדהוזחטיכךלמס
נןסעפףצץקרשת

- After Babylonian exile (587-539).

- Qumran, First Jewish War (66-70), Bar Kokhba's revolt (132-135): sporadic use of paleo-Hebrew script (as an identity marker, a national symbol?).

- Paleography: very different handwriting styles in medieval manuscripts (Italian, Yemenite, etc. etc. etc.)

- Ashkenazi cursive (hand writing) => Israeli cursive.

- Sephardic cursive (hand writing): also used for Ladino.

  - "Rashi" script: 16th c., developed from Sephardic cursive to differentiate between Bible text and commentary.

- 1920s: Hebrew stenography. 1936: Hebrew Braille (both left-to-right) Signs for each letter in Israeli Sign Language (ISL).

Early Hebrew epigraphy

Important inscriptions
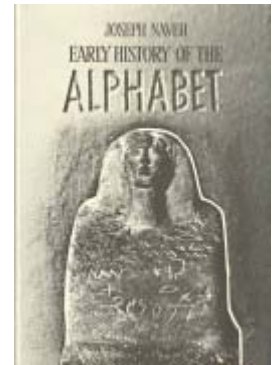from the first temple period

First temple period

First temple period: 10th century – 586 BCE

Epigraphy = study of inscriptions.

Found in archaeological excavations.

Using pre-exilic Hebrew script.
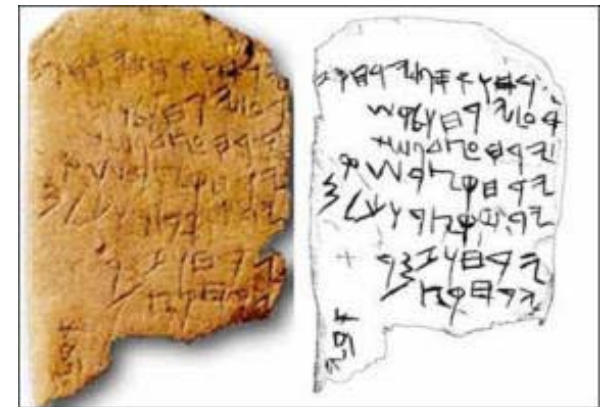

Some famous examples given below.

Recommended, even if not up-to-date introduction: Joseph Naveh. *Early History of the Alphabet*. Magnes Press, 1987. (Many copies at http://permalink.opc.uva.nl/item/002771446)

The Gezer calendar

End of 10th century BCE
School children learning agriculture?

The Gezer Calendar with ancient Hebrew writing

"Two months gathering   [September-October]

Two months planting   [November-December]

Two months late sowing   [January-February]

One month cutting flax   [March]

One month reaping barley   [April]

One month reaping and measuring (grain)   [May]

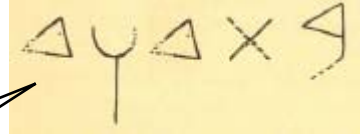Two months pruning   [June-July]

One month summer fruit   [August]

Abijah"

The Mesha stele

9th century

Moabite king's victory over house of David.

In Moabite language: too similar to Biblical Hebrew? Was it a general literary style?

Shape of letters: first distinctive features of Hebrew writing.
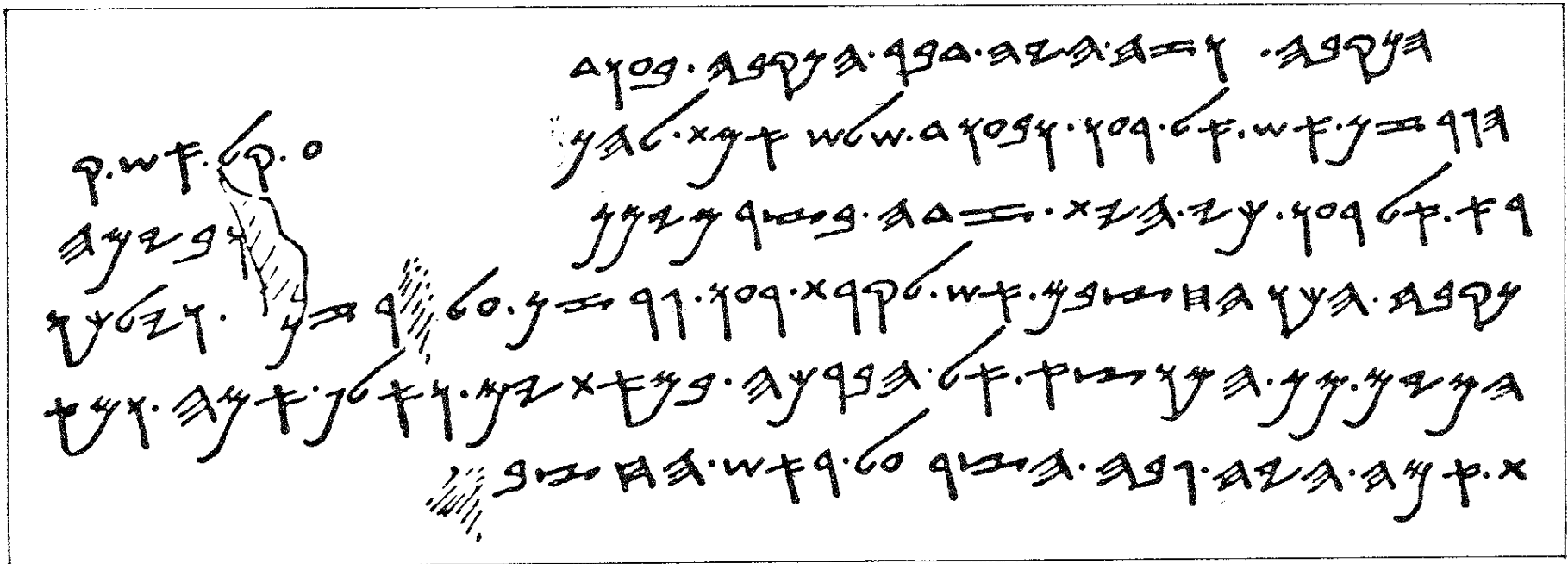
Read text on: http://en.wikipedia.

The Siloam (Shiloah) Inscription

2Chron. 32: *King Hezekiah* building a tunnel at the *Gihon Spring*, before the siege of Jerusalem by the Assyrians in 701 BCE.

Happiness when those digging the tunnel from the two ends finally meet in the middle.
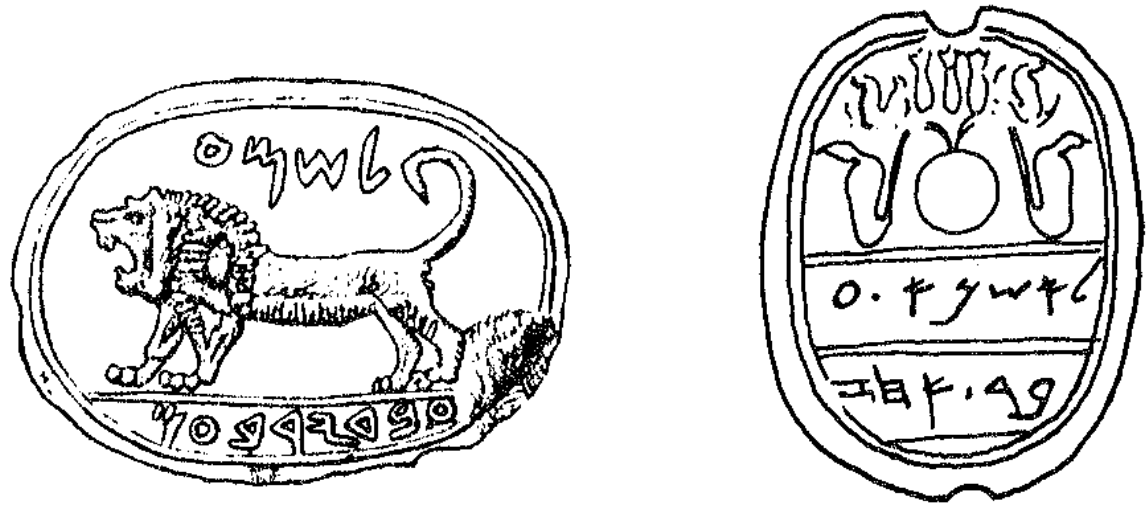
Seals

Fig. 64. Two Hebrew seals from the 8th century B.C.
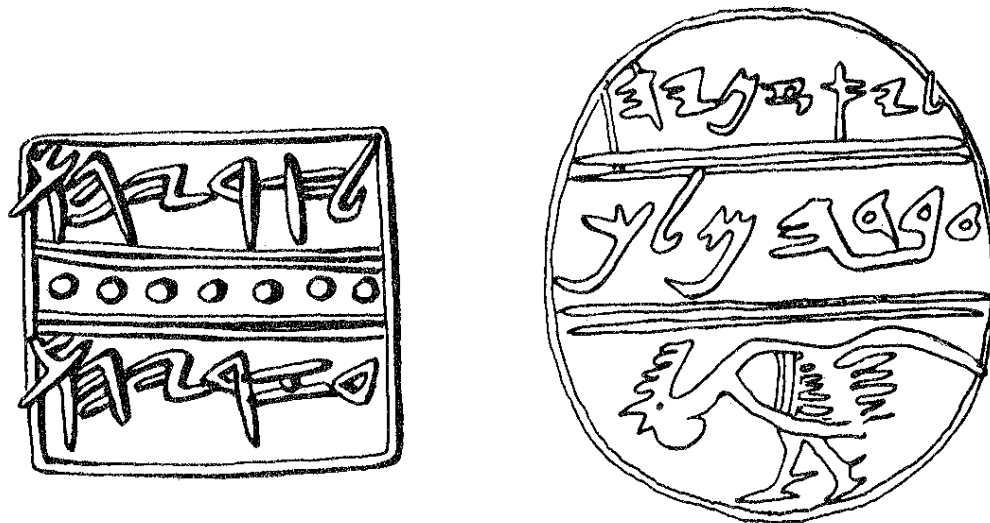

Fig. 61. Two Hebrew seals from the late 7th century B.C.

Jar handles:
la-melekh inscriptions

Fig. 62. The *bt lmlk* inscription on the shoulder of a jar from Lachish
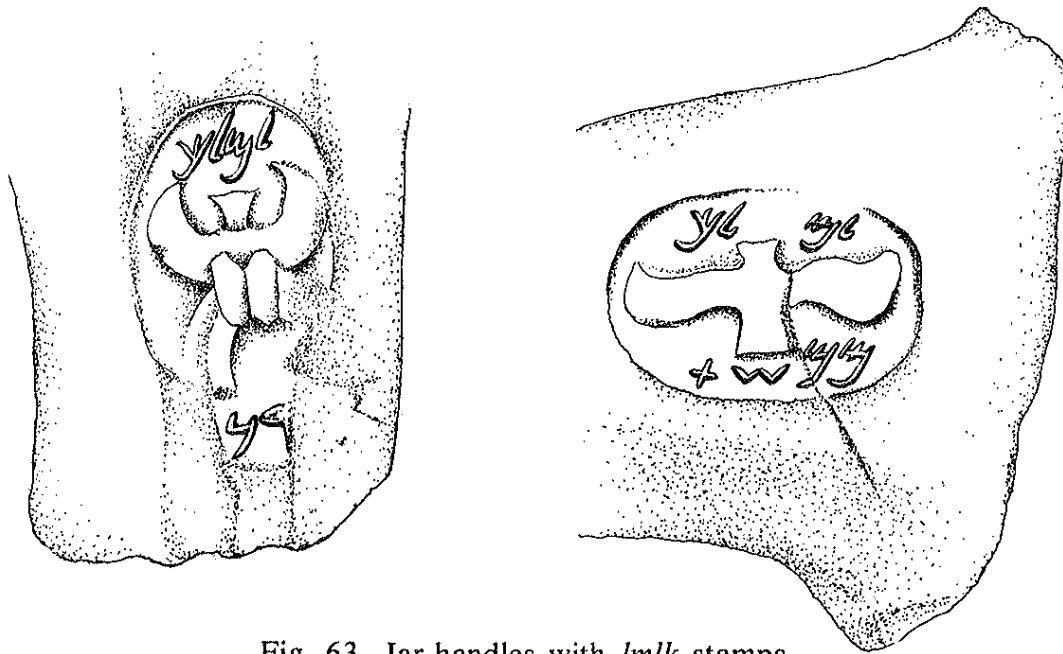

Fig. 63. Jar-handles with *lmlk* stamps
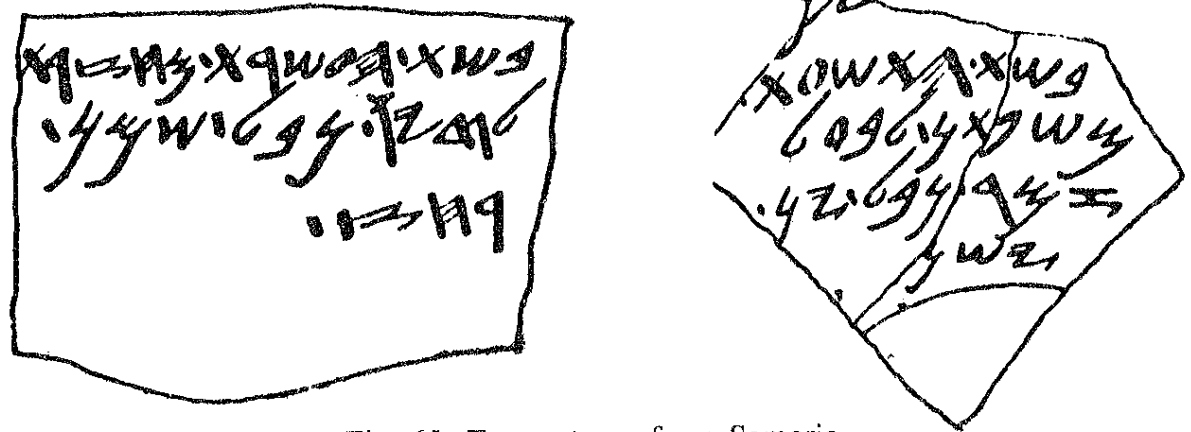
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Ostraca

Fig. 65. Two ostraca from Samaria

Ostracon: letter (or else) written (with ink, sometimes incised) on a piece of pottery (typically broken off from a vase).

Famous ones in Biblical archeology: Khirbet Qeiyafa (1000 BCE?), Samaria (8th c.), Mesad Hashavyahu (late 7th c.: petition to the local governor), Arad (early 6th c.), Lachish (early 6th c.)...
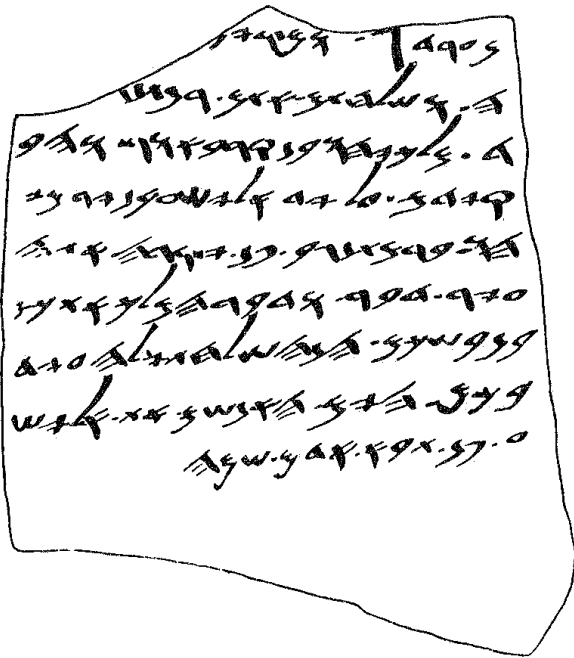
Ostraca

Fig. 66. An early 6th-century B.C. ostracon from Arad

Fig. 67. Late 7th-century petition from Meṣad Ḥashavyahu

Overview:

Development of the Paleo-Hebrew script:

1. Gezer calendar: 10th c.
2. Mesha stele: 9th c.
3. Siloam inscription: late 8th c.
4. Seals from the 7th cent.
5. Arad ostraca: early 6th c.
6. Leviticus fragment: 2nd c. BCE.
7. Medieval Samaritan bookhand.

Upper box: alef to kaf,

lower box: lamed to tav.

Name of the Hebrew letters

- Name of the Hebrew letters come from the Phoenician alphabet.

- Nice examples of sound changes:
  - Phoenician *rēš* ~ Hebrew *rōš*, but cf. *bərēšīt* (Proto-Semitic **rāš,* cf. Arabic *rās*).
  - Phoenician *bēt* ~ Hebrew *bayit*, status constructus (smichut) *bēt*. Probably, Proto-NWSemitic ** bayt* with a diphthong [ay]. It got monophthongized [ay] > [ē] in Phoenician and in the Hebrew status constructus. But in the status absolutus of Hebrew, a second vowel [i] got inserted, [y] became a full vowel, and so the diphthong was eliminated by turning the word into two syllables.

A few words on orthography

Spelling (Werner Weinberg: *The History of Hebrew Plene Spelling,* HUCP 1985, pp. 1ff):

Initially (10th c. BCE, Gezer and Phoenician inscriptions): extremely *defective/chaser*:

- בת (for בית),
- ז (for זה),
- לפנ (for לפני),
- שערמ (for שעורים, 'barley+plural')

Insertion of *matres lectionis* at the beginning of the words (more *plene/male* writing, cf. Mesha):

- כי [ki], בנתי [baniti]
- בנה [bana] and [b'no], cf. שלמה, כה, פה

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A few words on orthography

Phonological change *(monophthongization):* <u>diphthongs</u> turned into <u>monophthongs</u>: [iy] > [i:], [uw] > [u:], [ay] >[e:], [aw] >[o:], [a?] >[a:].

Hence, letters originally denoting consonants/glides, now denote vowels.

Hence, the idea of vowel letters:

– Crucial in non-semitic languages (Greek borrowing the Phoenician alphabet; Persian borrowing the Arabic alphabet; Yiddish and Ladino...)

Biblical Hebrew: matres lectionis sometimes with and sometimes without etymological history.

Late Biblical Hebrew: more plene than classical BH.

Qumran Hebrew: extremely plene spelling.

A few words on orthography

Israeli Hebrew:
  rules of the *Academy of the Hebrew Language:*
  - When to use *matres lectionis* in non-vocalized text (e.g., yod in open syllables, but not in closed ones).
  - How to transcribe foreign words:
     e.g. t vs. th, such as in טלפון vs. ‎.תאוריה

Please always remember:

  - The *writing system* is not part of the *language system*!

Many languages have no writing system. Some have more wr systems.

  - *Orthography* is not part of *grammar*!

Orthography = social convention, changing independently of lg.

Yet, traditional spelling can help reconstruct past stages the languages.

  - Do not confuse *sound* with *letter*!

Reading and assignment for next week

1. Read: Ch. Rabin, Chapter 4, pp. 25-37.

Assignment: Look up the Biblical references mentioned by Rabin in a (Dutch) Bible, and summarize context in 1 or 2 sentences.

At most 1 page. Email by Wednesday noon to: t.s.biro@uva.nl.

Subject: "Assignment 3". Preferably no attachment.

Additionally

2. Highly and urgently recommended: Appel et al., *Taal en Taalwetenschap,* chapters 17-19 (287-343).

3. Read the following two articles on translating the Hebrew Bible to Modern Hebrew / a.k.a. Israeli:

Ghil'ad Zuckermann:

http://www.jpost.com/Home/Article.aspx?id=142577

reaction by Shira Leibowitz Schmidt:

http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Op-EdContributors/Article.aspx?id=142578

What is *your* opinion?

See you next week!