

**Introduction
to Hebrew Linguistics**
(‘Inleiding Hebreeuwse Taalkunde’)
UvA, Week 4, February 24, 2011

Biblical Hebrew

Tamás Biró

Sources of linguistics

- (Prescriptive linguistics: the “Academy”)
- Descriptive linguistics Data = whatever native speakers say.
- L1 vs. L2. Adult vs. child.
- Observation vs. controlled experiments.
- What about past languages?
 - Written documents only. No tape rec. No chance to ask.
 - Written style often differs from oral style. Copyist’s errors.
 - Universals of *Homo sapiens* also apply to older languages.
 - Comparison with related languages (e.g. Hebrew vs. Arabic).
 - Internal reconstruction: irregularities explained by regular form in past?

Sources of Hebrew linguistics

We are lucky: really lots of data, from 3 millennia!

But, can we trust our sources?

- Hebrew Bible written during almost a millennium. Memorized + copied.
- Language changes much in 1000 years: linguistically copy-edited?
- BH, RH: almost exclusively medieval manuscripts.
- Masoretes (8-10th century CE), the Ben-Asher and Ben-Naphtali families. How reliable were they?
 - Biblical Hebrew? “Tiberian Hebrew”.

Questions in Hebrew linguistics

- What can we reconstruct regarding past stages of the Hebrew language?
- Do written sources reflect the spoken language?
- Does the existence of a *corpus* (whose language is *normative*) influence spoken language?
- Does the language change differently when it is used only as L2? (Medieval Greek, Latin, Hebrew)
- When was Hebrew used as L1? What other languages were used by Jews?

Diglossia, bilingualism and code switching.

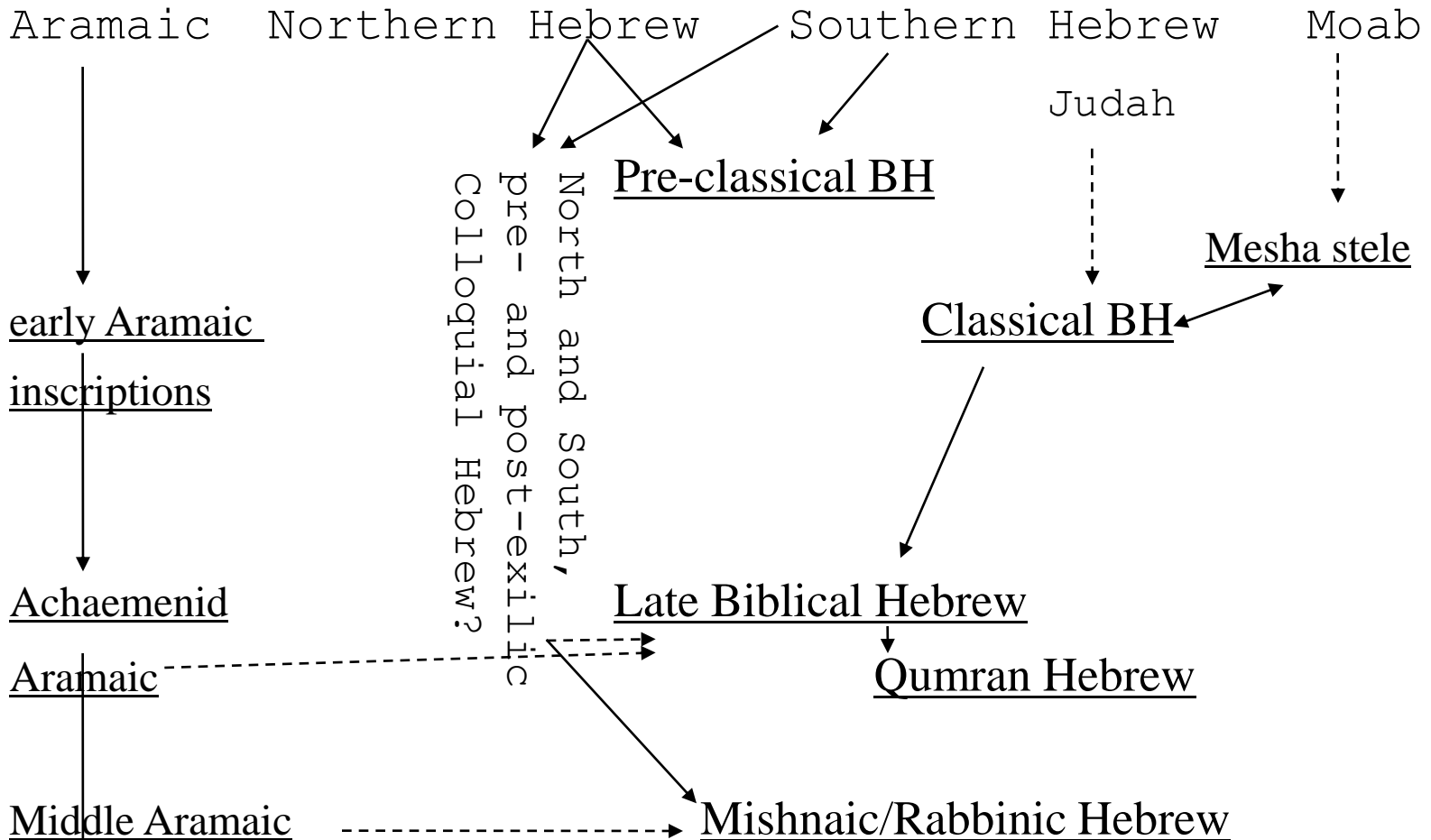
Biblical Hebrew: historical overview

History of Biblical Hebrew

- Northwest Semitic language continuum:
 - Temporal differences:
 - 2nd millennium BCE: Ugaritic, Old Canaanite (Amarna glosses)
 - 1st millennium BCE: Aramaic, Phoenician, Hebrew, Moabite, etc.:
 - innovations (e.g. definite article)
 - loss of archaic features (e.g., case system)
 - Geographic differences:
 - Ugaritic (to the Northwest), Aramaic (to the Northeast): [ā]
 - Canaanite languages (to the West and South: Old Canaanite = Tel el-Amarna glosses, Phoenician, Hebrew, Moabite, etc.):
 - Major isogloss: [ā] > [ō] Canaanite sound shift
 - Stylistic differences:
 - Literary or official language variety: CBH ≈ language of Mesha stele
 - Colloquial (= spoken) language variety

History of Biblical Hebrew: ^{hypoththesized} spoken vs. written documents

Geography: Northwest Semitic spoken language continuum



Time:

1st Temple; Judges
2nd Temple; Bab. exile; 1st Temple; Judges

To observe: where are *no* connecting lines! Major break!

History of Biblical Hebrew

- Regional and tribal dialects of proto-Hebrew:
 - Tribal dialect in Judge 12:6? Ephraim: sibbolet ~ šibbolet
 - Southern vs. Northern dialects
 - Northern must have resembled Aramaic and Phoenician in many respects:
 - sound changes ([aw] > [ō], [ay] > [ē], pun in Amos 8:2 יִקַּי vs. יִקֵּי),
 - lexicon (Samaritan ostraca: šṭ [šatt] ~ BH šānā ‘year’ < * šanātu), etc.
- “Aramaic” features found in pre-classical BH poetry, Late BH (e.g. Song of Songs) and Mishnaic Hebrew:
 - Arameism? Maybe, maybe not. Don’t judge too quickly!
 - Maybe influence of Northern dialects:
 - In pre-classical poetry: ok.
 - Northern dialects after Babylonian exile? Samaritans: descendants of Northern Kingdom + people settled there by Assyrians.
 - Even in colloquial (spoken) language in the South, but avoided in the written language for stylistic reasons⁸?

Biblical Hebrew: sources

History of the text in Biblical Hebrew

- Sources: oral tradition(s) and/or written tradition(s)
 - Source criticism of the Pentateuch (= Torah)
J. Wellhausen (1880s): four sources: J, E, D, P.
- Several/final redaction(s) of the text.
- Transmission of the text: orally and/or in written form. Yet: no vocalization, no delineation of sentence borders, no intonation (is it a statement or question?), no tune – to be remembered orally!
- Canonization: gradual process. Torah canonized by Ezra & Nehemiah. Hebrew Bible canonized by Javne.
- Copied: extreme care, but still errors.
- Antique and modern translations. Masorah.

Traditions of Biblical Hebrew

Hebrew Bible = TaNa"Kh (תנ"ך = תּוֹרָה נְבִיאִים כְּתוּבִים) = OT

- Ancient fragments. Qumran and other old manuscripts, inscriptions.
- Tiberian masorah: Ben Asher and Ben Naphtali families.
 - Ben Asher school: Aleppo Codex, Leningrad Codex.
- Other masoretic traditions: Babylonian, Palestinian
 - Different signs, describes different pronunciation.
 - Survived in the Cairo Geniza and in Yemenite manuscripts.
- Samaritan Hebrew
- Transliteration to Greek ("Secunda") in Origen's Hexapla.
- Translations: Greek (Septuagint, Aquila, Symachus, Theodotion), Latin (e.g. Vetus Latina and Vulgate), Syriac (e.g. Peshitta), etc₁₁

Traditions of BH: pronunciation

- Ancient fragments. Qumran and other old manuscripts: no vocalization (*nikkudim*)!
- Tiberian masorah: probably had a tradition of pronunciation that did not survive.
- Other masoretic traditions: Babylonian, Palestinian
 - Different and fewer signs, not distinguishing between certain vowels.
 - Different signs. Reflect different traditions of pronunciation again.
- Samaritan Hebrew, Medieval and modern pronunciations: extreme diversity (see 2nd half of course).
- Grk transliterations. Transcriptions in translations:
 - Not every Hebrew sound could be transcribed to Greek/Latin.

Biblical Hebrew: Classical Biblical Hebrew

Classical Biblical Hebrew

- First Temple Period, until 586 BCE.
- Why is CBH linguistically so homogeneous?
 - It covers half a millennium. Language must have changed a lot.
 - Written at the same time? (Say, in the 6th century?)
 - Final edition at the same time?
 - Gradual linguistic “updating” until canonization?
 - Was CBH a standard literary language, which changed much slower than colloquial language?
- Compare Masoretic Text (MT) vs. Tanakh RAM

Classical BH: Shma

- Shma: Deut. 6:4-9 (*NB: we shall need it next weeks, too.*)

דברים פרק ו, ד-ט

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְקֹוֹק אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְקֹוֹק אֶחָד: וְאֶהְבֵּת אֶת יְקֹוֹק אֱלֹהֶיךָ
בְּכָל לְבָבְךָ וּבְכָל נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְכָל מְאֹדְךָ: וְהָיוּ הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר
אָנֹכִי מְצַוְּךָ הַיּוֹם עַל לְבָבְךָ: וְשָׁנַנְתָּם לְבִנְיָךָ וְדִבַּרְתָּ בָּם בְּשִׁבְתְּךָ
בְּבֵיתְךָ וּבְלֶכְתְּךָ בַדֶּרֶךְ וּבְשֹׁכְבְךָ וּבְקוּמְךָ: וְקִשְׁרָתָם לְאוֹת עַל יָדְךָ
וְהָיוּ לְטֹטְפֹת בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ: וְכִתַּבְתָּם עַל מְזוֹזֹת בֵּיתְךָ וּבְשַׁעְרֶיךָ: ֹ

To observe: waw consecutive, possessive suffixes, object suffixes, possession expressed by construct state (smichut), infinitive construct with preposition ב.

CBH: Shma

- Shma: Deut. 6:4-9 (*NB: we shall need it next weeks, too.*)

דברים פרק ו, ד-ט

4. Luister, Israël: de HEER, onze God, de HEER is de enige!
5. Heb daarom de HEER, uw God, lief met hart en ziel en met inzet van al uw krachten. 6. Houd de geboden die ik u vandaag opleg steeds in gedachten. 7. Prent ze uw kinderen in en spreek er steeds over, thuis en onderweg, als u naar bed gaat en als u opstaat. 8. Draag ze als een teken om uw arm en als een band op uw voorhoofd. 9. Schrijf ze op de deurposten van uw huis en op de poorten van de stad.

(De Nieuwe Bijbelvertaling)

Biblical Hebrew: Pre-classical Biblical Hebrew

Pre-classical poetry: Judges 5

(ג) **שְׁמָעוּ** מְלָכִים **הָאֲזִינוּ** רִזְנִים אָנֹכִי לִיקוֹק אָנֹכִי אֲשִׁירָה אֲזַמֵּר
לִיקוֹק אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

(ד) יְקוֹק בְּצִאתְךָ מִשְׁעִיר בְּצַעֲדְךָ מִשְׁדֵּה אָדוֹם אַרְץ רַעֲשָׁה גַם
שָׁמַיִם נָטְפוּ גַם עֲבִים נָטְפוּ מַיִם:

(ה) הָרִים נָזְלוּ מִפְּנֵי יְקוֹק זֶה סִינֵי מִפְּנֵי יְקוֹק אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

(ו) בְּיָמַי שִׁמְגַר בֶּן עֲנַת בְּיָמַי יַעַל חֲדָלוּ אַרְחוֹת וְהִלְכִי נְתִיבוֹת יִלְכוּ
אַרְחוֹת עֶקְלָקְלוֹת:

(ז) חֲדָלוּ פְּרָזוֹן בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל חֲדָלוּ עַד **שִׁקְמָתִי** דְּבוֹרָה **שִׁקְמָתִי** אִם
בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל:

Parallelism: CBH words vs. literary/Aramaic/Northern (near-) synonyms.

“še” and other features: not in CBH, but in late BH, and often in
Mishnaic Hebrew (and also MedH and IH): Northern feature?

Colloquial, non-literary feature?

Pre-classical poetry: Judges 5

3. Koningen en vorsten, luister en hoor toe hoe ik de HEER bezing, een lied zing voor de HEER, de God van Israël.
4. HEER, de aarde beefde toen u voortschreed vanuit Seïr; toen u optrok vanuit Edom stortte water uit de hemel en de wolken neer.
5. Voor de heerser van de Sinai wankelden de bergen, voor u, HEER, u, de God van Israël.
6. Onder Samgar, de zoon van Anat, in de tijd van Jaël, begaf geen karavaan zich nog op weg. Wie toch op reis moest, nam de kronkelpaden.
7. Aanvoerders ontbraken, het land kende geen leiding totdat jij, Debora, kwam en Israël tot leidsvrouw werd.

Pre-classical poetry: Exodus 15

(יז) תְּבַאֲמֵי וְתִטַּעַמֵי בְּהַר נַחֲלֹתֶיךָ מִכּוֹן לְשִׁבְתֶּךָ פְּעֵלֶיךָ יְקוּקֵי
מִקְדָּשׁ אֲדֹנָי כּוֹנְנוֹ יְדִירֵךְ:

U brengt hen naar de berg die uw domein is, HEER, en daar zult u hen planten, in uw eigen woning, het heiligdom door u gebouwd. (De Nieuwe Bijbelvertaling)

-mo suffix: archaic, instead of –hu
paal, instead of *asa*.

Pre-classical poetry: Deuteronomy 33

(ב) וַיֹּאמֶר יְקֹזֵק מִסִּינַי בָּא וְזָרַח מִשְׁעֵיר **לָמוּ** הוֹפִיעַ מֵהַר פָּאֵרן
וְאַתָּה מֵרַבְּבַת קִדְּשׁ מִיְמִינוֹ אֲשַׁדַּת [אֵשׁ דָּת :Q] לָמוּ:

lamo ~ **lahu* > *lo*.

ba ~ *ata* (standard in Aramaic)

K^etiv vs. Q^erei: “*write אשדת but pronounce אֵשׁ דָּת!*”

Original meaning is unclear (אשרת??). “Fire of law” is mistaken. The origin of the word *dat* ‘law’ is LBH, from Persian origin. (Not **dint*, feminine of *din*.) LBH ‘law’ > MedH ‘law’ and ‘religion’ > IH ‘religion’.

Pre-classical poetry: Deuteronomy 33

De Nieuwe Bijbelvertaling: Hij zei: ‘De HEER verscheen vanaf de Sinai, zijn licht bescheen hen vanuit Seir, met luister kwam hij van de bergen van Paran. Talloze engelen vergezelden hem, bliksem flitste uit zijn rechterhand. (Talloze engelen vergezelden hem – Voorgestelde lezing. MT: ‘En hij kwam van tienduizenden van heiligheid’.)

Herziene Statenvertaling: Hij zei: De HEERE is van Sinaï gekomen, als de zon kwam Hij uit Seir op. Hij verscheen blinkend vanaf de Paranbergen, Hij kwam met tienduizenden heiligen, aan Zijn rechterhand was een vurige wet voor hen.

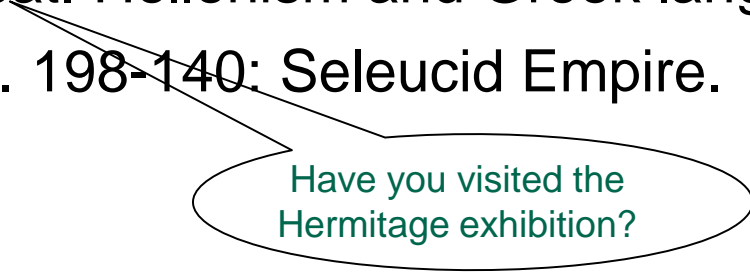
NBG-vertaling 1951: Hij zeide: De HERE is gekomen van Sinai en over hen opgegaan uit Seir; Hij is in lichtglans verschenen van het gebergte Paran en gekomen uit het midden van heilige tienduizenden; aan zijn rechterzijde zagen zij een brandend vuur.

Biblical Hebrew: Late Biblical Hebrew

The language of the late Biblical books, those being written after the Babylonian exile, and whose language was affected by the spoken language(s) during this period.

Late Biblical Hebrew (LBH): History

- 721: Northern Kingdom conquered by the Neo-Assyrian Empire.
- 598/7: First exile of Judah by the Neo-Babylonian Empire.
- 587/6: Destruction of first Jerusalem temple, second exile.
- 539: Persian Empire conquers Neo-Babylonian Empire. (Cf. Daniel)
- 538: Cyrus decree: Jews may move back to Israel.
- 516: Start building second Jerusalem temple.
- Persian period: Ezra, Nehemia; story of Esther.
- 336-323: Alexander the Great. Hellenism and Greek language.
- 323-198: Ptolemaic Empire. 198-140: Seleucid Empire.
- 140-63: Hasmoneans.
- From 63 BCE: Romans.
- 66-70 CE: Jewish War. 70: Destruction of Second Temple.



Have you visited the Hermitage exhibition?

Late Biblical Hebrew: Linguistic history

- During the Babylonian exile: Aramaic and some Akkadian.
 - Jews adopt the Aramaic language and the Aramaic script.
 - Were all Jews deported? or only the elite? or only the urban population? Hebrew speaking (rural) population remaining in Judea?
 - Hebrew speaking population in Northern Israel?
Samaritans: those not deported after 721 + those settled down to the Northern territories by the Neo-Assyrian empire.
- 538: Cyrus edict. Zerubabel. Ezra: several waves of returnees from the Babylonian exile. Still, many Jews stay in the Diaspora.
- Persian empire: Aramaic and Persian (and Akkadian in writing). (Persian is Indo-European. Aramaic is also official language.)
- Hellenism: Greek, especially in cities. But Aramaic remains dominant lingua franca in the Middle East (until Arabic conquest).

Late Biblical Hebrew: Multilingualism

- Multilingual surrounding society:
 - Aramaic and Persian. Akkadian literary traditions. Later Greek.
- Multilingual Jewish society:
 - Hebrew (in Judah? + the language of the religious tradition)
 - Aramaic (in Galilee? + Most of the Diaspora; cf. Elephantine papyri)
 - After end of 4th century: Greek in Hellenistic cities.
- Functional diglossia within Hebrew: two language (varieties) used for two different purposes: spoken Hebrew vs. literary Hebrew.
(Similar cases: Swiss German, Arabic, Persian, modern Greek, Middle Aramaic...)
 1. Colloquial varietie(s) of Hebrew, developing toward what will become Mishnaic (Rabbinic) Hebrew.
 2. LBH = literary language imitating CBH.
But colloquial interference inevitable.

Late Biblical Hebrew: Texts

- Post-exilic story & many LBH features:
Esther, Ezra-Nehemiah, Daniel, last prophets.
- Believed to be post-exilic & some LBH features:
Song of Songs (*Shir ha-shirim*, pace Rabin), Ecclesiastes (*Qohelet*),
Proverbs (*Mishlei*), Chronicles, several psalms, frame story of Job.
- Usually believed to be post-exilic (on non-linguistic ground)
but no (convincing) LBH features: Priestly code of Pentateuch (P),
Deutero-Isaiah and Trito-Isaiah, Ruth, Lamentations (*Eicha*).
- NB: Aramaic portions of Daniel and of Nehemiah:
Daniel 2,4b-7,28; Ezra 4,8-6,18; 7,12-26; Jer. 10,11; Gen. 31,47aβ.

LBH: Linguistic features

- Aramaic, Persian, and later Greek influence
 - Especially in the Diaspora (cf. Persian words in Book of Esther)
 - Aramaic portions of Daniel and Ezra.
- LBH = artificial literary language imitating CBH.
 - Colloquial interferences are inevitable.

Features:

- Persian loanwords. Greek loanwords (Songs 3:9 and Daniel 3:15-17)
- No consequent use of waw consecutive: verbs have CBH aspects (perfect, imperfect) => LBH tenses (past, future)
- Some colloquial or Northern features reappear, such as *she-*.
- Spelling is very *plene* (*male*: with *matres lectionis*).

Late Biblical Hebrew: Esther 9

(א) ובשנים עשר חדש הוא חדש **אדר** בשלושה עשר יום בו אשר הגיע דבר המלך **ודתו** להעשות ביום אשר שברו איבי **היהודים** לשלוט בהם ונהפוך הוא **אשר** ישלטו היהודים המה בשנאייהם:

(כג) **וקבל** היהודים את אשר החלו לעשות ואת אשר כתב מרדכי אליהם:

Qibel: Persian loanword, no agreement (cf. also Ktiv in 9:27), waw is not a waw-consecutive.

(כד) כי המן בן המדתא האגגי צרר כל היהודים חשב על היהודים לאבדם והפיל **פור הוא הגורל** להמם ולאבדם:

(כו) על כן קראו לימים האלה **פורים** על שם **הפור** על כן על כל דברי **האגרת** הזאת ומה ראו על ככה ומה הגיע אליהם

Late Biblical Hebrew: Esther 9

1. De dertiende dag van de twaalfde maand, de maand adar, brak aan, de dag waarop het bevel en de wet van de koning zouden worden uitgevoerd, de dag waarop de vijanden van de Joden hen in hun macht hoopten te krijgen. Maar het omgekeerde gebeurde: het waren juist de Joden die hun belagers in hun macht kregen.
23. De Joden gaven gevolg aan wat Mordechai hun schreef, en maakten zo een vast gebruik van iets waarmee ze zelf al een begin hadden gemaakt.
24. Want zo was het gegaan: Haman, de zoon van Hammedata, een nakomeling van Agag en de vijand van alle Joden, had een plan beraamd om de Joden uit te roeien. Hij had het poer, dat wil zeggen het lot, laten werpen om paniek onder hen te zaaien en hen te kunnen uitroeien.
26. Het is naar het woord poer dat deze dagen Poeriem worden genoemd. (De Nieuwe Bijbelvertaling)

Post-Biblical Period

(a.k.a. intertestamental period,
Hellenism and early Roman period)

and Qumran

Post-Biblical Hebrew

- Books that were written in the (late Persian), Hellenistic and early Roman period, but which did not make it into the canon of the Hebrew Bible => apocrypha
- Deutero-canonistic books: which were nevertheless canonized by the catholic church (and orthodox churches and eastern churches) as part of their Old Testament. The Jews and the protestants do not accept them as canonical.
- Similar style and similar language to LBH books: trying to imitate classical Biblical texts.
 - Pseudepigraph: claiming the authorship of a classical biblical book.
- *Ben Sira, 1st Book of Maccabees, Judith, Wisdom of Solomon...*
- *...2-4Maccabees, Tobit, Psalms of Solomon, Book(s) of Enoch, Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, Testament of Solomon...*
 - Much of these argued to have / might have been written in Greek. Some written in Hebrew or Aramaic, but survived only in Greek, Coptic, Syriac, Old Church Slavic, etc. Some discovered in Qumran or Cairo Geniza in Hebrew.

Qumran Hebrew

- Qumran and other Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS):
 - Discovered in/since 1947.
 - Qumran community: 2nd century BCE – 1st century CE
 - Scrolls contain
 - Portions of Biblical books (except Esther), maybe slightly different textual traditions. NB: some of these texts had not been canonized yet.
 - Apocryphal books: probably still having similar status to the Biblical books that were later canonized.
 - Books written by the community itself, or by similar communities (e.g. Damascus Covenant: already known before 1947)
 - Other documents of the community itself.
 - Not to confuse with other “Discoveries in the Judean Desert” (DJD), such as Bar-Kokhba letters from 132-135 CE.

Qumran Hebrew

- Some scrolls in Aramaic (pl. Genesis Apocryphon). Some scrolls in/closer to colloquial language, to be known as Mishnaic Hebrew.
- **Qumran Hebrew:** books authored by the Qumran community, but at least discovered among their documents. (Not the Hebrew of the Biblical books.)
 - Similarly to the authors of the late Biblical books, the Qumran community also used BH as literary model.
 - Probably spoke some variety between LBH and Mishnaic H. And also Aramaic?
 - Similar linguistic features to LBH: for instance,
 - Less waw consecutive, aspect > tense in verbal system.
 - Pronouns and verbs may get a final ה suffix.
 - Use of *she-*
 - מן instead of מ- . דמשק דרמשק instead of דמשק.
 - Extremely plene spelling: ירושלים, דוֹיֵד

Reading for next week

(downloadable from the website)

- Read Chaim Rabin: chapters 5 (Mishnaic Hebrew) and 6 (Hebrew in the diaspora).
- Patrick R. Bennett: *Comparative Semitic Linguistics*.
For the assignment: part 3, especially end of p. 26 t/m p. 31.
Recommended to read parts 1-3 now, needed the for exam.
- J. Loose: *De Talen van het Oude Nabije Oosten*, pp. 77-120; or Sabatino Moscati (ed.). *Intro to the Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages*, pp. 3-21.
For the assignment: read sections on Aramaic.
Recommended to read it now, needed the for exam.

Assignment for next week

- Read: see previous slide. Look up varieties of Aramaic (AA = Persian Empire, Sy = medieval, Ma, Ur and MM are modern (20th century) dialects).
- Download Bennett, Wordlist B. Choose 10 terms from the list, such that you are familiar with the Hebrew word.
- Assignment: For each of the 10 items:
 - Group the translations of this term to the 21 languages, according to similarity. Draw the *isoglosses*: sometimes a very different word is used & sometimes sound changes happen in the word.
 - Compare AA to He. Compare them to Ug and Ph. What do you observe? Can you reconstruct a proto-Northwest Semitic form?
 - (*Optional*: can you reconstruct a proto-Semitic form?)
 - Compare AA to Sy, Ma, Ur and MM: how did the word change?

For each item, describe your observations in a few lines. Email by Wednesday noon. Subject: "Assignment 4". Preferably no attachment.

See you next week!

Motto for next week: אסתר פרק א

(כב) וַיִּשְׁלַח סֹפְרִים אֶל כָּל מְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל
מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה כְּכֹתֵבָה וְאֶל עַם וְעַם כְּלִשׁוֹנוֹ
לְהִיּוֹת כֹּל אִישׁ שֵׁרָר בְּבֵיתוֹ וּמְדַבֵּר כְּלִשׁוֹן עַמּוֹ: