

Mid-semester take-home exam

Introduction to Hebrew linguistics (T. Biro)

Deadline: Friday, April 13, 2012

The exam can be submitted both in an email (as an attachment) or on paper (in my post-box on the 4th floor of the Bungehuis).

Each part is worth 10 points. In total, you can get 30 points at most.

The suggested length for the answers to each part is one page. You can submit it in Dutch, too.

Question 1: What is the cousinhood of Hebrew, and how do we know it?

Write an essay describing the methods and problems faced by linguists when discussing which languages are related to Hebrew, and how they are related to each other. In your essay, you have to:

- Use language examples from different languages quoting Bennett: *Comparative Semitic Linguistics* (see website or library), parts 1-3.
- Additionally, refer to at least two of your previous readings.
- Discuss the family tree model *versus* the innovation wave model (eventually look up further references).
- Use the academic standard for references, bibliographic details, etc.

Hints and suggestions for the discussion:

- Why can geographically distant, peripheral languages be similar? Why can older, linguistically otherwise more distant languages share some features, not shared by linguistically closer, chronologically more recent languages? Solution: archaic features.
- Similarities can be due to (1) common ancestors, (2) language contacts, (3) typological similarity, (4) language universals, (5) coincidence.
- How do the following relate to each other: (1) relatedness of languages, (2) relatedness of their writing systems, (3) ethnic, cultural or genetic relatedness of their speakers?

Question 2: Biblical Hebrew, versus Israeli Hebrew

Use the *Tanakh Ram* (Gen. 13 and Gen. 37 available on the website of the course) to compare Biblical Hebrew to Israeli Hebrew.

Choose ten phenomena that you discuss shortly (what changed into what). Illustrate these phenomena by quoting examples from the *Tanakh Ram*, based on a passage of your selection of approximately 10-15 verses. NB: unlike in your previous assignment (when you compared the texts, and so you arrived at phenomena), now I would like you to start with the phenomena, and then illustrate them with textual examples.

Choose phenomena from various linguistic domains: phonology, verbal and nominal morphology, syntax (phrase-level, sentence-level), semantics, lexicon, pragmatics, orthography, etc. As varied as possible.

Question 3: The long history of some words used in Israeli Hebrew

Take your favourite text or passage from your favourite Modern Hebrew book or textbook. It can be a long paragraph, or a half-page long text. Please include a copy of this text to your answers.

Choose ten words, and describe shortly what you can know or guess about their history. Choose words as different as possible (old, new, Semitic, foreign, nouns, verbs, prepositions, pronouns...), with very different histories.

Make use of your readings and knowledge of other languages (including Dutch jargon, which includes many words of Hebrew/Yiddish origin), your creativity and common sense. Additionally, look up the words in Klein's dictionary (refer to it in a scholarly manner, with full bibliographical details and page numbers):

E. Klein. *A comprehensive etymological dictionary of the Hebrew language for readers of English*.

New York: MacMillian, 1987. <http://permalink.opc.uva.nl/item/000040346> (*Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana*).

Good luck with it! Feel free to contact me for more clarification or help.