

Theme: From Biblical Hebrew to Mishnaic Hebrew

Reading: Rabin, *A Short History of...*, Chapt. 5; Moshe Bar Asher (1999). 'Mishnaic Hebrew: An Introductory Survey'. *Hebrew Studies* 40:115-151.

Assignment (due: November 12): What are the "dimensions" along which the Hebrew language(s) discussed by Bar Asher varies? Provide an example for each of them.

1. Biblical Hebrew

1.1 Pre-Classical Biblical Hebrew: The language of some poetical passages:

Song of Deborah (Judges 5), Prayer of Hannah (1Sam 2), Blessing of Jacob (Genesis 49), Song of the Sea (Exodus 15), Bileam's blessings (Numeri 24-25), Song of Moses (Deut. 32), Blessing of Moses (Deuteronomy 33)

1.2. Classical Biblical Hebrew: First Temple period, until 586 BCE.

Surprisingly homogeneous: final redaction? literary standard language?

1.3 Late Biblical Hebrew: late biblical books, written after the Babylonian exile.

1.4 "Post-Biblical Biblical Hebrew": Qumran, apocrypha, etc.

2. Mishnaic (Rabbinic) Hebrew

	<u>Palestine</u>	<u>Babylonia</u>
	Bar Kochba letters	
<i>Tannaitic period</i>	Mishna, Tossefta	---
<i>1st-3rd c. CE</i>	Aggadic midrashim	
<i>Amoraic period</i>	Aggadic midrashim	Babylonian Talmud
<i>3rd-6th c. CE</i>	Jerusalem Talmud	

3. Hebrew-Aramaic bilingualism

Deut. 26:5

And thou shalt speak and say before HaShem thy G-d: 'A wandering Aramean was my father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there, few in number; and he became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous.

Gen. 31:47

And Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha; but Jacob called it Galeed.

Gen. 24:10 and 25:20: Rebecca from *Aram-Naharaim*.

2Kings 18:26 (Isa. 36:1)

Then said Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, and Shebna, and Joah, unto Rab-shakeh: 'Speak, I pray thee, to thy servants in the Aramean language; for we understand it; and speak not with us in the Jews' language, in the ears of the people that are on the wall.'

Portions of the Hebrew Bible in Aramaic: Isaiah 10:11. Ezra 4:8-6:18 and 7:12-26. Daniel 2:4b-7,23

Nehm. 13:24

and their children spoke half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people.

Esther 1:22

for he sent letters into all the king's provinces, into every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language, that every man should bear rule in his own house, and speak according to the language of his people.

Babylonian Talmud, *Megilla* 18a

The Rabbis did not know what was meant by, "*we-tetethia bematate* of destruction"¹, till one day they heard the handmaid of the household of Rabbi say to her companion, Take the tatitha [broom] and tati [sweep] the house.

¹ Isa. XIV, 23. E.V., 'I will sweep it with the besom of destruction'.