

**Introduction
to Hebrew Linguistics
(‘Inleiding Hebreeuwse Taalkunde’)
UvA, Week 4, March 2, 2012**

Tamás Biró

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:

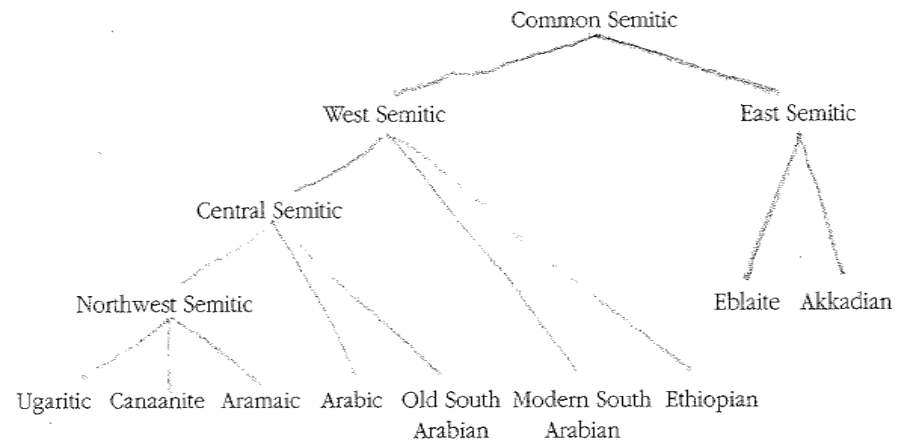
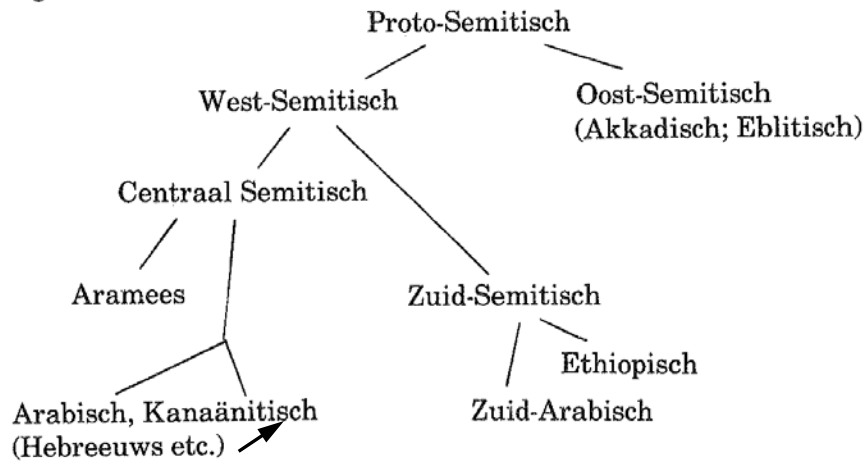
- (1) Make sure you read carefully and learn the chapters.
- (2) Teach you to read critically: not to necessarily accept everything, since other opinions are also possible.
- (3) Show that many opinions can be simultaneously around in science.

Assignment for this week

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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.

Fig. 1



Hebrew: prehistory and four periods

0. Proto-Semitic, proto-NW-Semitic, proto-Canaanite, and proto-Hbrw: *“The family tree: ancestors and relatives.”*
1. Biblical Hebrew: *“Did King David speak like the Bible?”*
Pre-classical BH, classical BH, post-exilic BH; Qumran Masoretic Hebrew = Tiberian Hebrew
2. Mishnaic/Rabbinic Hbrw: *“A spoken language written”.*
3. Medieval Hebrew: *“Dead or alive?”*
4. Modern Hebrew, Israeli Hebrew (Israeli language)
Haskala, language revival, contemporary IH
“Is it obvious that Hebrew is the language of Israel?”

History of the alphabet

From pictograms to a writing system

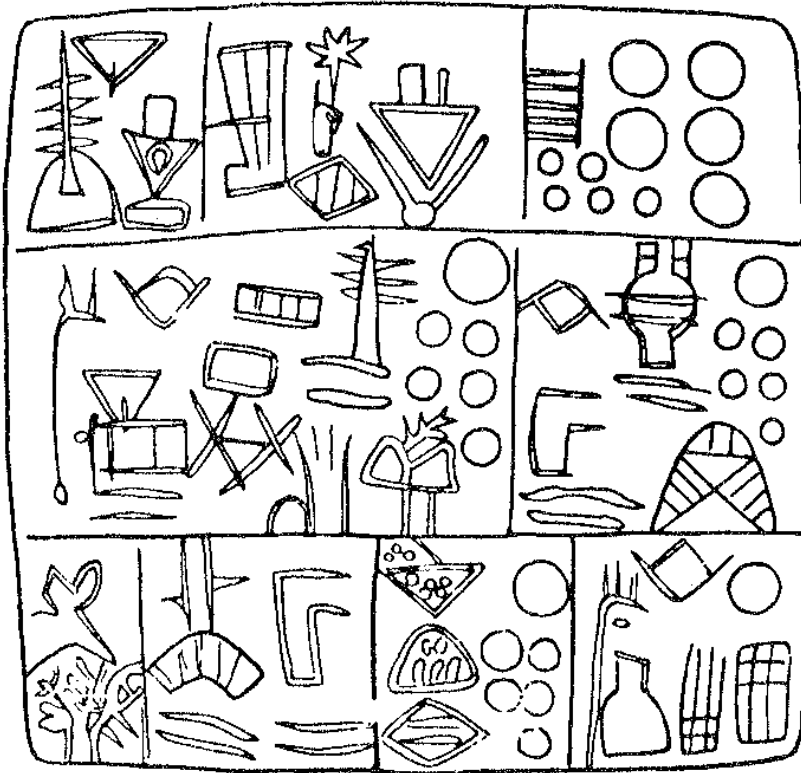


Fig. 2. Sumerian pictographic inscription

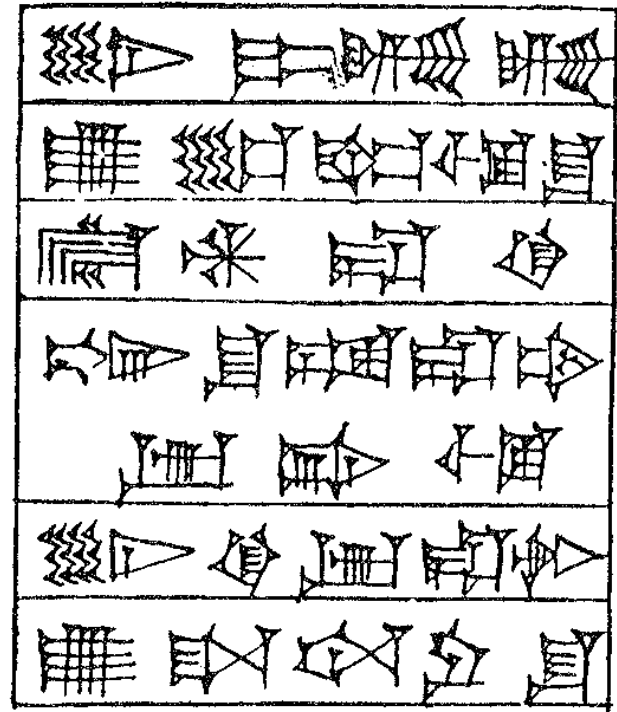


Fig. 3. Babylonian cuneiform text

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
	<i>j</i>	Egyptian vulture
	<i>i</i>	flowering reed
	<i>y</i>	{(1) two reed-flowers {(2) oblique strokes
	<i>r</i>	forearm
	<i>w</i>	quail chick
	<i>b</i>	foot
	<i>p</i>	stool
	<i>f</i>	horned viper
	<i>m</i>	owl
	<i>n</i>	water
	<i>r</i>	mouth
	<i>h</i>	reed shelter in fields
	<i>h</i>	wick of twisted flax
	<i>h</i>	placenta (?)
	<i>h</i>	animal's belly with teats
	<i>s</i>	{(1) bolt {(2) folded cloth
	<i>g</i>	pool
	<i>h</i>	hill-slope
	<i>h</i>	basket with handle
	<i>g</i>	stand for jar
	<i>t</i>	loaf
	<i>t</i>	tethering rope
	<i>d</i>	hand
	<i>d</i>	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?)

Phon. Value	Schematic Forms	Early North-west Semitic	Early South Semitic	Early Letter Names	Meaning of Names
ʾ	𐤀 𐤁	𐤀 (14th) 𐤁 (13th)	𐤀 𐤁 (Jamme)	ʾalp-	ox-head
b	𐤂 𐤃	𐤂 (17th) 𐤃 (13th)	𐤂 𐤃	bêt-	house
g	𐤄 𐤅	𐤄 (15th) 𐤅 (12th)	𐤄 𐤅	gaml-	throw-stick
d	𐤆 𐤇	𐤆 𐤇 (10th)	𐤆 (Jamme)	digg-	fish
ḏ	𐤈 𐤉	?	𐤈 𐤉 (Jamme)	?	?
h	𐤊 𐤋	𐤊 (10th)	𐤊	hô(?)	man calling
w	𐤌 𐤍	𐤌 (10th)	𐤌 (ʾ used for y)	wô(waw)	mace
z	?	𐤎 (16th) 𐤏 (10th)	𐤎	zê(n-)	?
ḥ	𐤐 𐤑	𐤐 (13th) 𐤑 (10th)	𐤐	hê(t-)	fence(?)
b	𐤒 𐤓	?	𐤒 (Jamme)	ba()	hank of yarn
t	?	𐤔 (16th) 𐤕 (10th)	𐤔	tê(t-)	spindle?
y	𐤖 𐤗	𐤖 (13th) 𐤗 (10th)	𐤖 (orig w)	yad-	arm
k	𐤘 𐤙	𐤘 (17th) 𐤙 (13th)	𐤘 𐤙	kapp-	palm
l	𐤚 𐤛 𐤜 𐤝	𐤚 (14th) 𐤛 (13th)	𐤚 𐤛 (Jamme)	lamd-	ox-goad
m	𐤞 𐤟 𐤠	𐤞 (15th) 𐤟 (13th)	𐤞 (9th) 𐤟 (8th)	mêm-	water
n	𐤢 𐤣 𐤤	𐤢 (14th) 𐤣 (12th)	𐤢 𐤣 𐤤	noḥš-	snake
š	?	𐤥 (10th)	𐤥 𐤦	(šamk-?)	?
e	𐤨 𐤩	𐤨 (12th) 𐤩 (10th)	𐤨	ʿên-	eye
g	𐤫 𐤬	𐤫 (15th)	𐤫 𐤬 (Jamme)	ḡa()	?
p	𐤭 𐤮	𐤭 (10th)	𐤭 𐤮	pu't-(?)	corner?
s/z	𐤯 𐤰	𐤯 (10th)	𐤯 𐤰	ša(d-)	plant
q	?	?	𐤱	?	?
r	𐤳 𐤴	𐤳 (14th) 𐤴 (10th)	𐤳 𐤴 (Jamme)	qu(p-)	?
š/t	𐤶 𐤷	𐤶 (16th-14th)	𐤶 𐤷	na'š-	head of man
š/t	𐤹 𐤺	𐤹 (13th) 𐤺 (10th)	𐤹 𐤺	tann-	composite bow
š	𐤼 𐤽	?	𐤼 𐤽 (Jamme)	?	?
t	+	+ x (13th)	x + (Jamme)	tô(taw)	owner's mark

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

West-Semitic consonantal writings based on the principle of acrophony

- West-Semitic alphabet: strongly influenced by Egyptian uniconsonantal signs?
- Ugaritic script:
 - Akkadian (language & script) was also used in Ugarit.
 - Developed alphabet (27C + 3V), but based on cuneiform:

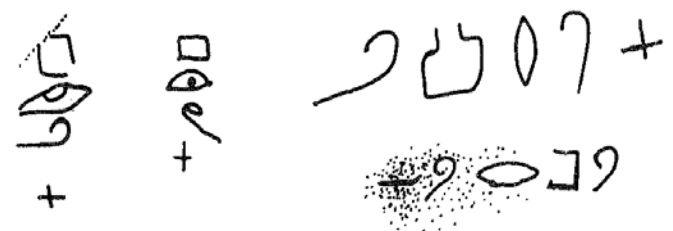


Fig. 16. The word (l)b'lt in the Proto-Sinaitic inscriptions

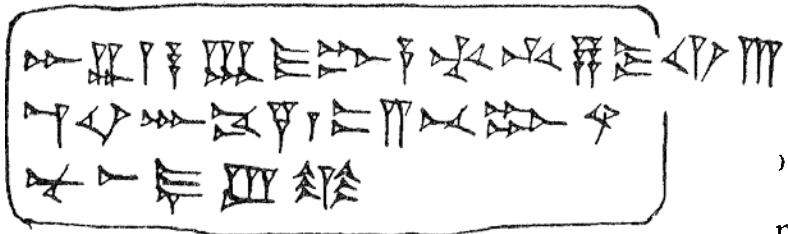


Fig. 25. An abecedarium from Ugarit

'a b g ḥ d h w z ḥ ṭ y k š l
 m ḏ n ṣ s ' p ṣ q r t
 ḡ t 'i 'u s₂



- 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.

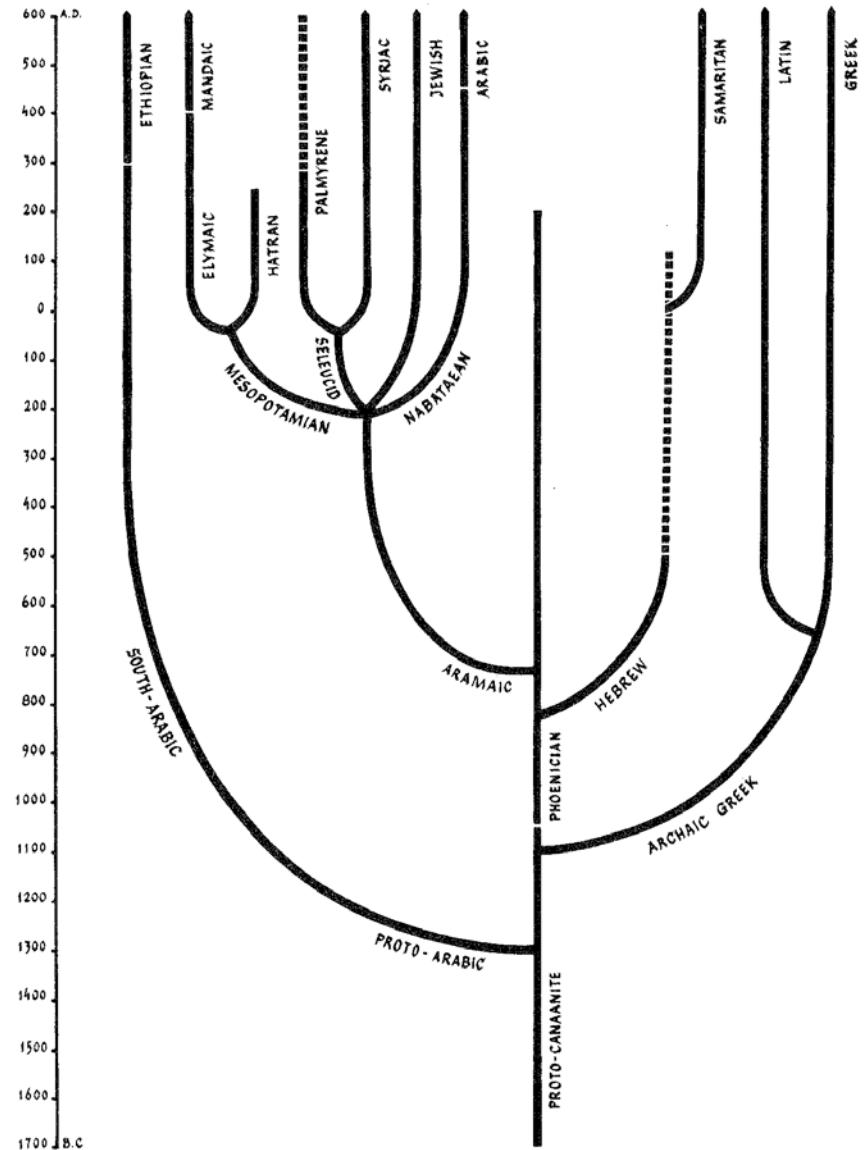
Further history of the Alphabet

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

אבגדהוזחטיכךלמם
נוסעפףאזקרשת

- 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

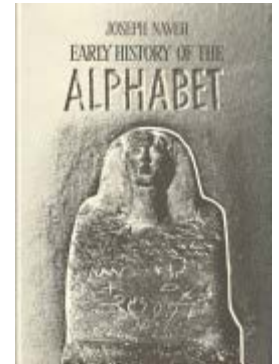
First temple period: 10th century – 586 BCE

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

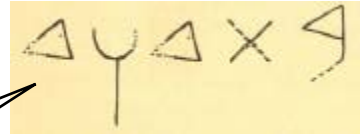
[August]

Abijah”

Source of image: http://www.truthnet.org/Bible-Origins/4_How_was_Bible_written/Gezer_Calendar_Hebrew.jpg

The Mesha stele

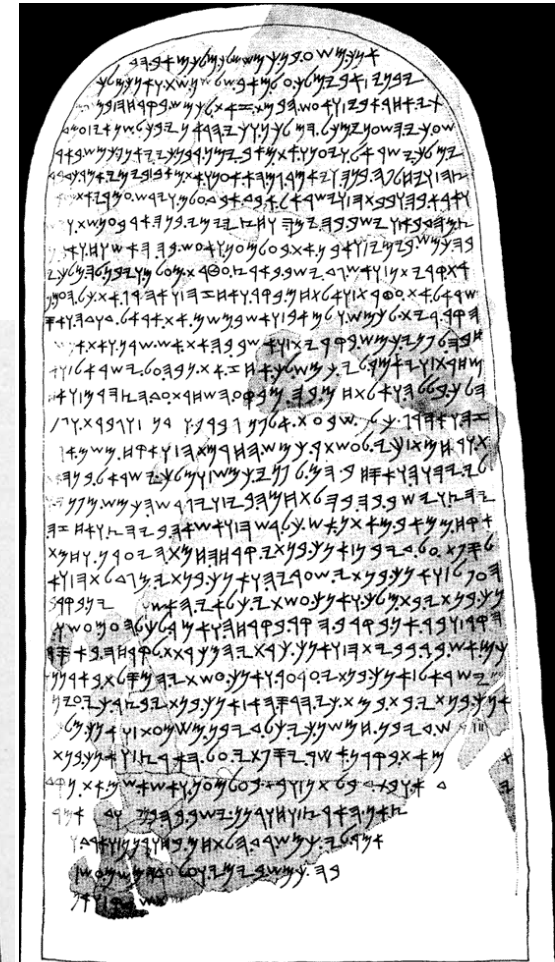
9th century



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.

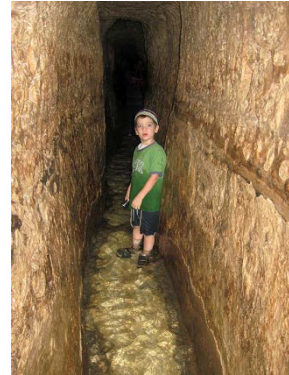


Read text on: <http://en.wikipedia>.

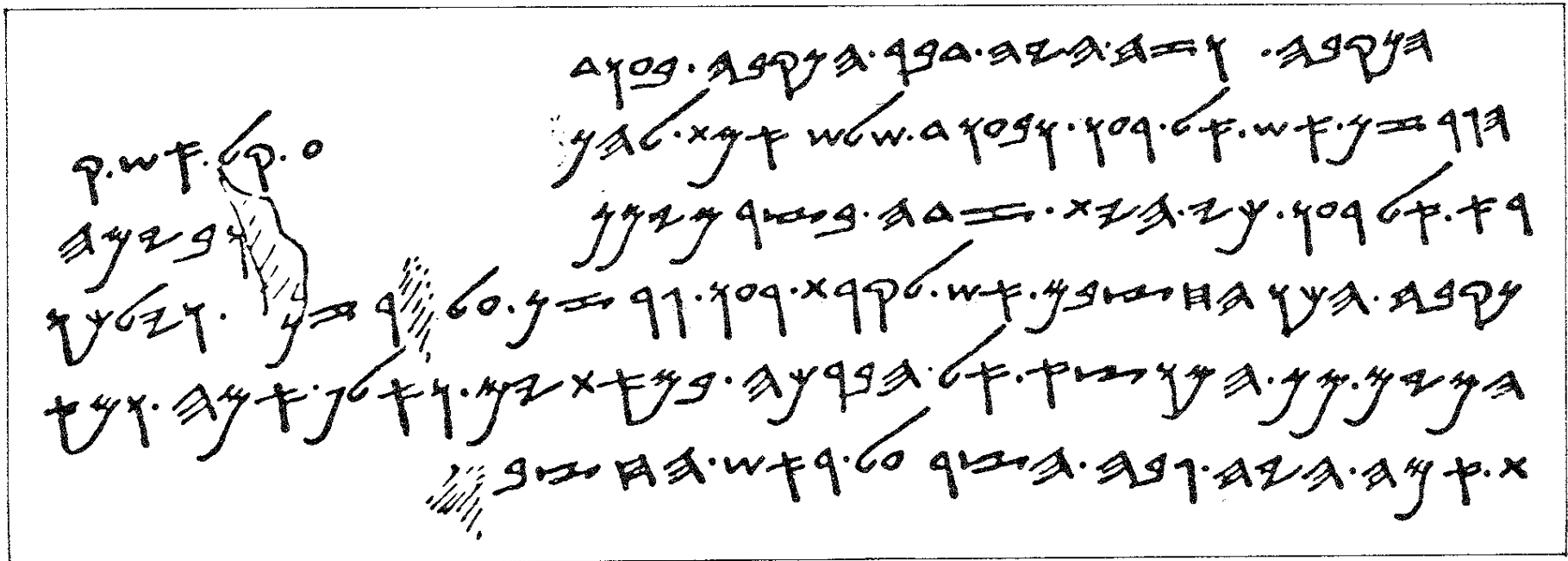
Source of images: <http://issachar5.files.wordpress.com/2010/05/mesha-stele.jpg>,
http://www.houseofdauid.ca/bd_mesha.jpg, <http://vadym.web.cern.ch/vadym/images/MeshaSteleInscrip10cmh.gif>

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

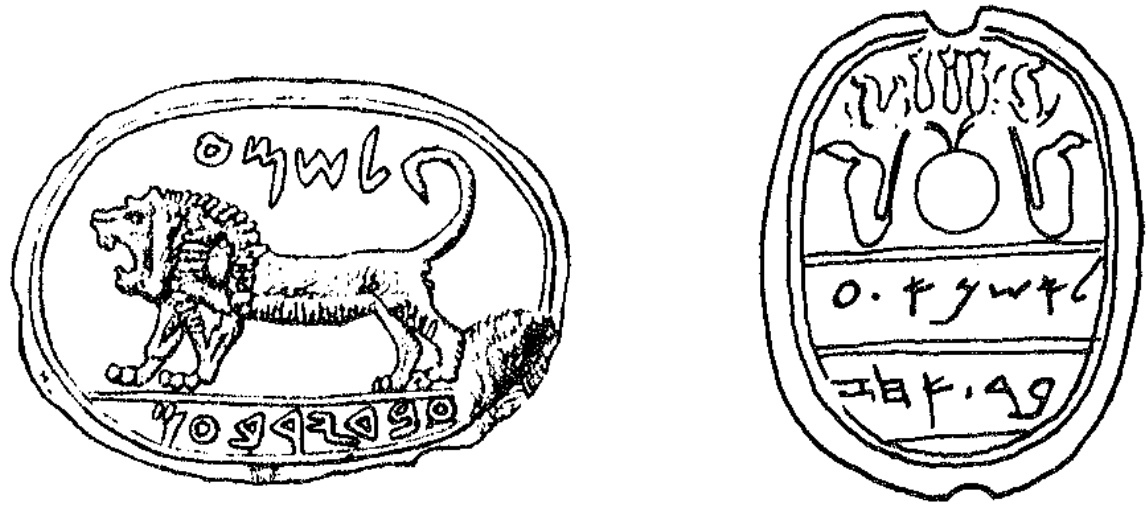


Fig. 64. Two Hebrew seals from the 8th century B.C.

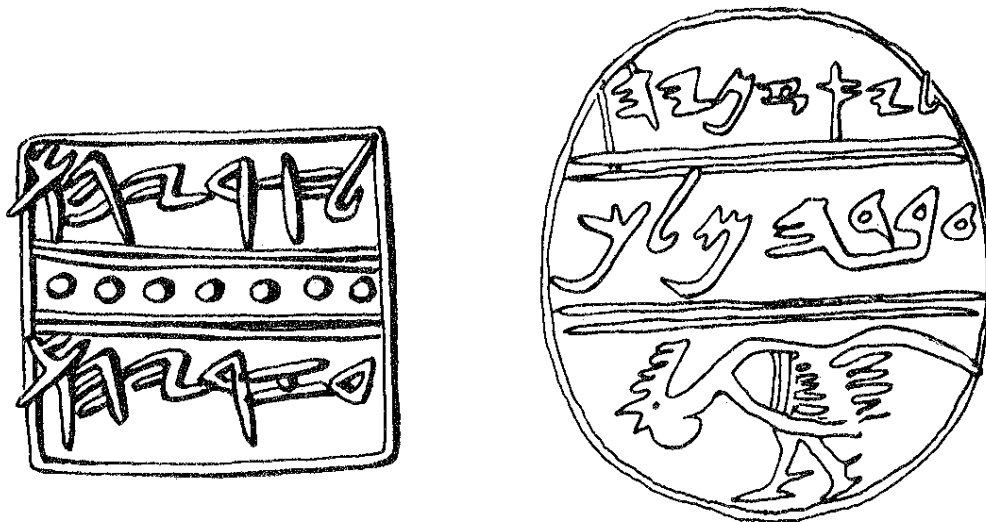


Fig. 61. Two Hebrew seals from the late 7th century B.C.

Jar handles: *la-melekh* inscriptions



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

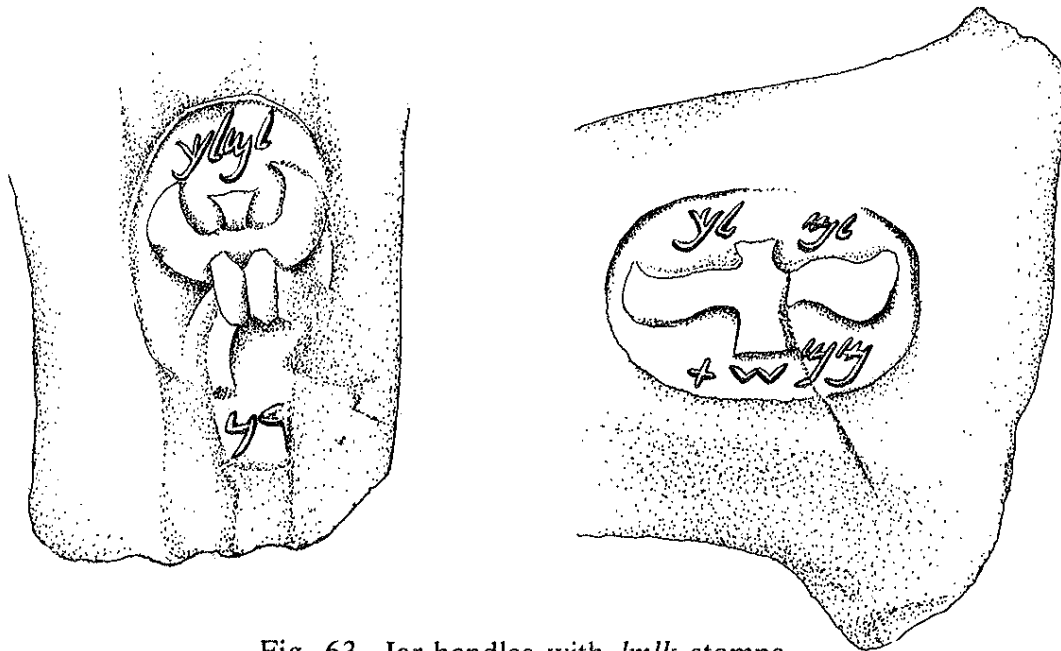


Fig. 63. Jar-handles with *lmlk* stamps

Ostraca

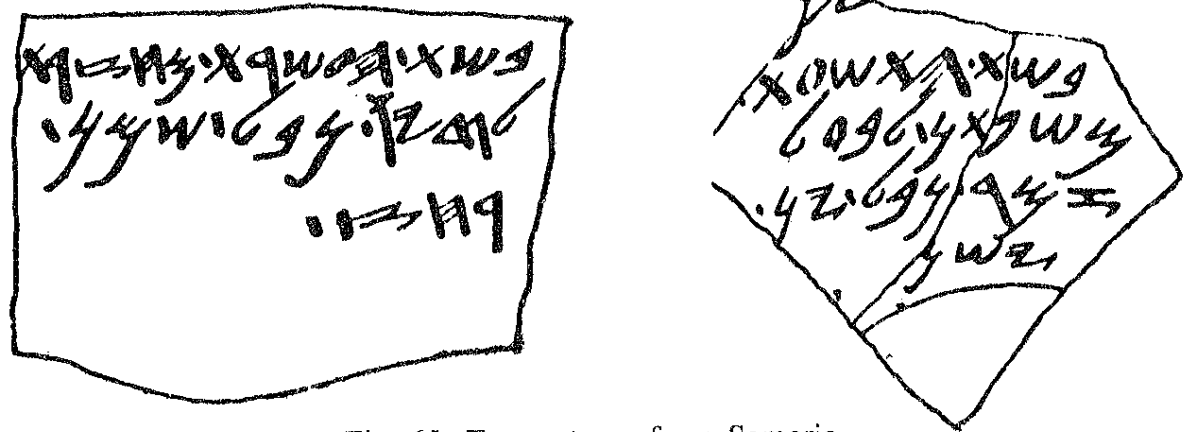


Fig. 65. Two ostraca from Samaria

Ostracoon: 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

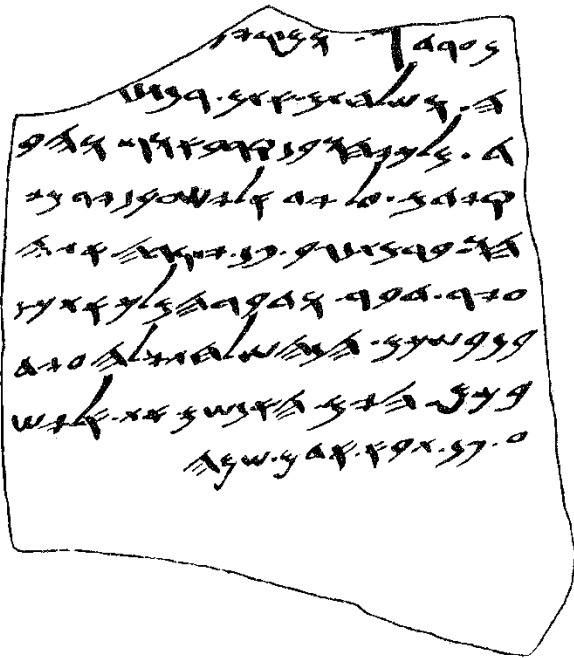


Fig. 66. An early 6th-century B.C. ostracum from Arad

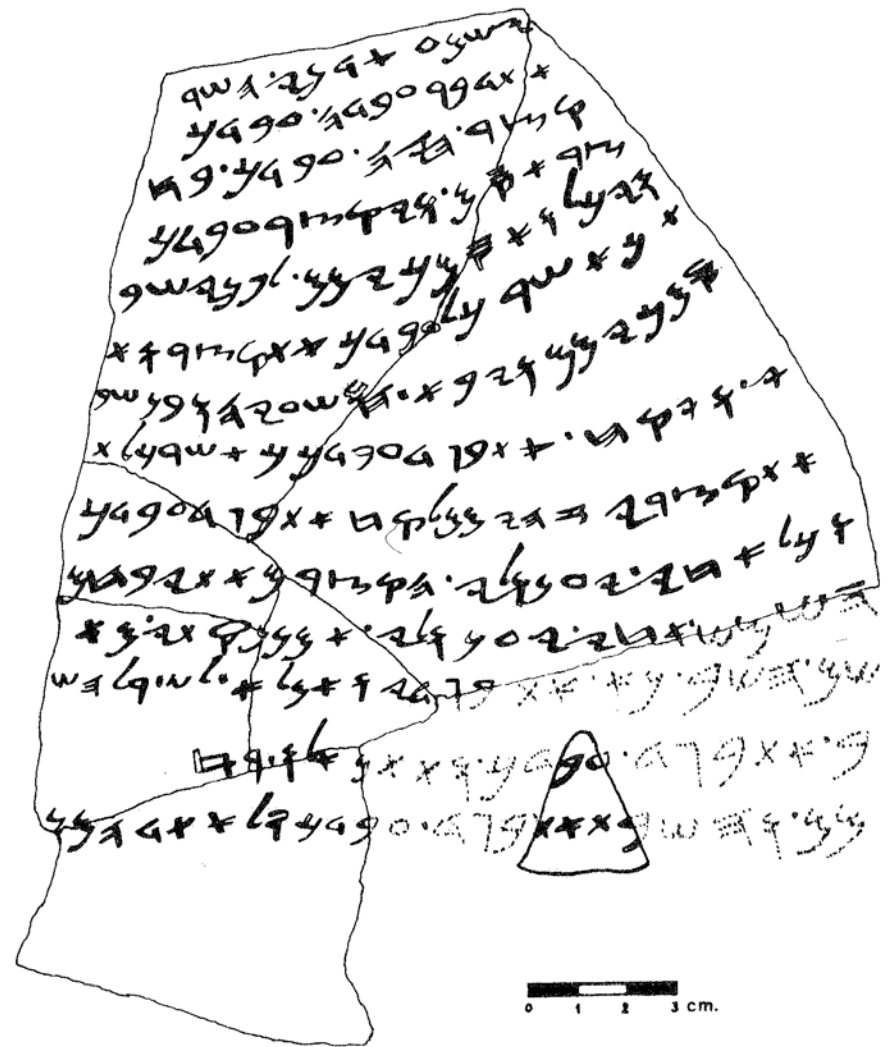


Fig. 67. Late 7th-century petition from Mešad Ḥašavyahu

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-NW-Semitic **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'na], cf. שלמה, כה, פה.

A few words on orthography

Phonological change (*monophthongization*): diphthongs turned into monophthongs: [iy] > [i:], [uw] > [u:], [ay] > [e:], [aw] > [o:], [aʔ] > [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 תאוריה. טלפון.

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 for next week

1. Read: Ch. Rabin, Chapter 4, pp. 25-37.
2. 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?

Assignment

Visit the Etruscan exhibition in the Allard Pierson Museum (free entrance with UvA student card). You will find a few objects that contain Etruscan inscriptions. These will be usually transcribed on the explanatory cards next to the object. Comparing to Latin and Greek, what is your impression about the Etruscan script and language? Can you decode the letters? Some (not much) information about their language and writing system is given in the introduction to the exhibition.

Assignment: Describe your observations and subjective impressions about these Etruscan inscriptions in a few sentences.

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

See you next week!