

History of Hebrew Language

The Ancient Hebrew language is one of the oldest written languages. The earliest written language (according to modern scholars) is the Proto-Sinaitic script, which the Biblical Hebrew language directly descends from. Over time, Proto-Sinaitic became the Phoenician Script also known as "Paleo Hebrew". The Paleo Hebrew Script is the script the Torah was originally written in, and Paleo Hebrew is the ancient language the Israelites spoke in Bible Times.

In modern languages, words are generally understood to be spellings of sounds. Definitions are determined by usage, shifting with times and changing vernaculars. Sometimes the original meanings survive, and sometimes they don't. This is as true of modern Hebrew as it is of English.

The ancients, however, had a much richer and more organic sense of language. Language was acknowledged to be the gift of **Yahuah**, and words were seen not as spellings of sounds, but as operations of the interacting principles reflected in creation itself. It is for this reason that the Paleo-Hebrew alphabet is known as "the letters of creation."

Paleo-Hebrew is basically like biblical Hebrew written with an older alphabet. It is the form of Hebrew found in inscriptions, on some coinage, and how Scripture was originally written. As far as structure and language, it is essentially identical to biblical Hebrew - it just looks different.

All texts, later incorporated in the Hebrew Bible, which were brought into exile in Babylonia in the early 6th century BCE, would have been written in Paleo-Hebrew scripts resembling those of the Mesha, Siloam and/or Lachish and with the orthography of Epigraphic Hebrew.

										
kaf	yod	tet	het	zayin	waw	he	dalet	gimel	beyt	'alef
k	y	ṭ	ḥ	z	u	h	d	g	b	·
										
taw	šin	reš	qop	šade	pe	'ayin	samek	nun	mem	lamed
t	š	r	q	š	p	·	s	n	m	l

We need to state clearly here all Hebrew scripts go from right to left, the opposite of our modern English language. All ancient languages go from right to left. Paleo Hebrew was the ONLY script the Scriptures (TaNaK) were written with until after the return from the Babylonian exile. After the Exile, the Prophet and Scribe Ezra, changed the script to the script we use today, ironically called "Biblical Hebrew. In reality, this script is really the ancient Aramaic Script. Aramaic was the language of the Babylonians and Persians. The Jews in exile in Babylon and Persia had grown accustomed to this foreign language during the Exile.

The Aramaic language had the same 22 letter alphabet as Paleo Hebrew. The letters had the same names, and same sounds, but looked different. (Compare the chart below with the chart above). Ezra began using the Aramaic Script (and established the Aramaic Script as the ONLY Script for Biblical manuscripts) to make it easy for the Israelite Exiles to re-learn their Scriptures and their ancient faith.

The Script Ezra used (Aramaic) is still the script we see today in Hebrew TaNaKs and Siddurim. (The word "Siddurim" comes from the Hebrew verb "SaDaR" which means "to put in order". A Hebrew Siddur (plural "Siddurim") is a Hebrew Prayer book for synagogue service.) Another way of stating this is to state that in our modern Hebrew TaNaKs, we see the Hebrew language in Aramaic letters. Here is the Biblical Hebrew (Aramaic) Aleph Bet (Alphabet):

								
Tet (T)	Chet (Ch)	Zayin (Z)	Vav (V/O/U)	He (H)	Dalet (D)	Gimel (G)	Bet (B/V)	Alef (Silent)
								
Samech (S)	Nun (N)	Nun (N)	Mem (M)	Mem (M)	Lamed (L)	Khaf (Kh)	Kaf (K/Kh)	Yod (Y)
								
Tav (T/S)	Shin (Sh/S)	Resh (R)	Qof (Q)	Tzade (Tz)	Tzade (Tz)	Fe (F)	Pe (P/F)	Ayin (Silent)

The ancient Hebrew language (including Paleo Hebrew and Aramaic) did not have a written system of vowels. Only the consonants were written. Between the fifth and tenth centuries of the Common Era, Karaite Hebrew Scribes (called the Masorites) of the Ben Asher family developed a system of vowels to be added to the Biblical Hebrew texts.

The Texts they codified became known as the Masoretic Text. These vowel “points were added to the text in a way that the consonants were not changed. The vowels are a system of dots and dashes above, below, and in between the Hebrew consonants. The doctrine of inerrancy (that the TaNaK was written by Elohim through men, and is infallible) to a Hebrew means that the consonants are inerrant, whereas the vowels are just an aid for pronunciation. It is imperative to understand that the consonants are the only factor in determining the meaning of a Hebrew word (though the context is also important). The vowels were not completed and added to Torahs by the Masoretic scribes until c. 980 CE

A significant part of the authoring, and most of the redacting of the Pentateuch, the Deuteronomistic History, the major prophetic books etc. took place in Babylonia from c. 590 BCE to c. 450 BCE. The language of that area was Aramaic. Presumably during that exile span of time the redaction of scriptures probably went hand with:

1. Aramaic displacing Hebrew as the spoken language of the exiles;
2. The rapid acceptance of the Imperial Aramaic script for writing both Hebrew and Aramaic; and,
3. An increased and more uniform use of vowel letters in Hebrew writing, partly under the influence of Aramaic spelling conventions and partly to distinguish Hebrew from Aramaic pronunciation of cognate words and forms. It is of course possible that this orthographic change took place without the acceptance of Aramaic script.

It is probable that the Torah, as a whole, the Deuteronomistic History, the major prophetic books etc. were “published” initially in the Aramaic script in Babylonia. Of course the redactors would have drawn on documents written in the Paleo-Hebrew scripts and the orthography of Epigraphic Hebrew. Thus it may be that all Paleo-Hebrew biblical texts (e.g. the Qumran Paleo-Hebrew Leviticus scroll, the Samaritan Torah) at one stage passed through a form in Aramaic letters. It is likely that some of the later books of the Bible, such as Esther, Proverbs, Qohelet, Jonah, Daniel etc. were composed in Aramaic script.

In examining likely errors, it is necessary to consider –

1. Word Division - Paleo-Hebrew texts usually used clear dots to separate words thus minimizing the likelihood of an error in word division. Biblical texts in the Aramaic-Square Hebrew script seem to have used blank spaces between words.

2. Confusion of Letters (see tables of scripts in *The Book of Hebrew Script: History, Palaeography, Script Styles, Calligraphy & Design* by Ada Yardeni)

a) *Paleo-Hebrew Script* – In Mesha and Siloam scripts confusion of letters is unlikely. Lachish script, being squat and somewhat cursive, errors are more possible if the document were written in a very small hand it might perhaps be .(p) פ n) and) ן possible to confuse

b) *Aramaic-Square Hebrew Script* – In Babylonia, the Jewish exiles would have adopted one or more versions of the Imperial Aramaic Script. The later Judean Jewish developments of the script are known as Square Hebrew or Jewish Script. The rapid evolution of this script as the script changed, so changed the letters that could be easily confused. Eg. in the Herodian script of the first century BCE, *waw*, *yod* and *zayin* could be confused as could *he* and *het*.

The problem is that a single line of texts copied might go from Mesha script to Lachish script to Imperial Aramaic script, to 3rd century BCE Jewish script to Herodian script potentially exposed to changing sets of possible letter confusions at each stage. A less likely line of development might be from Mesha script to Lachish script to early Second Temple Paleo-Hebrew script, to 3rd century BCE Jewish script to Herodian script.

Modern Hebrew Language

Many non-Jewish people in the world today never seem to ask the question of what language the so-called Jews are really speaking. Overwhelmingly it is assumed that they are speaking the ancient language of Hebrew. This could not be further from the truth.

The Khazarian (Turkic) people that call themselves Jews actually speak Yiddish. In fact the word Yiddish means Jewish which comes from the word Yid which means Jew. So Yiddish is not to be confused with Hebrew. In fact the Khazarian a.k.a. Jewish/ Yiddish language originated in the Ashkenazi culture that developed around the 10th century.

Yiddish seems to only be a hybrid of Hebrew sounds and heavy medieval German/Slavic dialects. Yiddish takes three-quarters of its vocabulary from German, but borrows words liberally from their version of Hebrew and many other languages from the many lands where Ashkenazi Jewish speaking people have lived. It really has a grammatical structure all of its own and its writings are based on a made up alphabet loosely based on the Hebrew characters of the Alphabet.

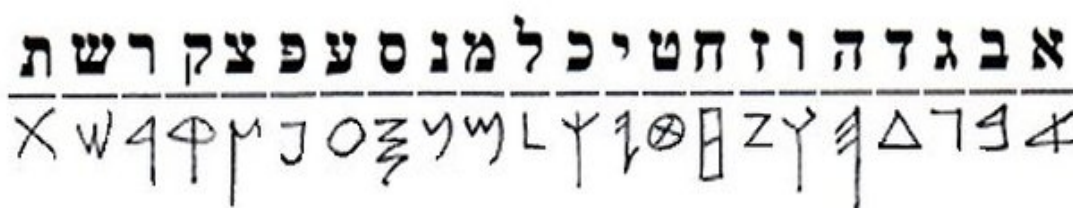
The language emerged right out of Rhineland Germany and then spread to Central and Eastern Europe and eventually to other countries. It developed by taking different

dialects such as German, Slavic, Aramaic, Romance languages and of course Hebrew. In short it is a Germanic language with Hebrew influence.

Around the 10th century during this period, the Masoretes of Tiberias established the Hebrew language orthography, or niqqud, a system of diacritical vowel points used in the Hebrew alphabet. They also use a system called Cantillation of the Hebrew Scriptures. Cantillation means to chant. This would allow them to change or modify paragraphs and verse divisions that could not be understood easily.















Having to so-call modify the pronunciation, paragraph and verse divisions and Cantillation of the Hebrew Scriptures with a system of pronunciation and grammatical guides is a clear sign that the Jews were not true Israelites (Yahu's). They could not understand the Hebrew scriptures in it's original form. The true Israelites (Yahu's) were never told to use a system called Cantillation or chant anything from the Hebrew Scriptures. The true Israelites (Yahu's) never needed vowel points to speak or write the language of Hebrew. Only an outsider would need this to understand how to speak and pronounce the words properly.

Yiddish is the primary spoken language of the Khazarian (Turkic) Ashkenazi Jews. It is written in a loose version of the Hebrew alphabet or just it's very own version all together. It appears the Jews did away with the Hebrew letters and formed their own letters but tried to keep the sounds intact. Notice the huge difference in the Modern Hebrew alphabet the Jews write and the ancient Paleo Hebrew alphabet.



Hebrew (Modern/Paleo) Alphabet

Hebrew letter	Paleo-Hebrew letter	English Name
א	𐤀	Aleph

ב		Bet
ג		Gimel
ד		Dalet
ה		He
ו		Waw
ז		Zayin
ח		Heth
ט		Teth
י		Yodh
כ/ך		Kaph
ל		Lamedh
מ/ם		Mem
נ/ן		Nun
ס		Samekh

ע	◌ֹ	Ayin
ף/פ	◌ֶ	Pe
צ/ץ	◌ֵ	Tsade
ק	◌ִ	Qoph
ר	◌ֻ	Resh
ש	◌ֹ	<u>Shin</u>
ת	◌ֻ	Taw