

# Sémi összehasonlító nyelvészet

BMA-HEBD-303

*Biró Tamás*

11. Írástörténet

*2016. május 12.*

Az írásról

# Miért (nem) kell tudnia egy sémi nyelvésznek az írásról?

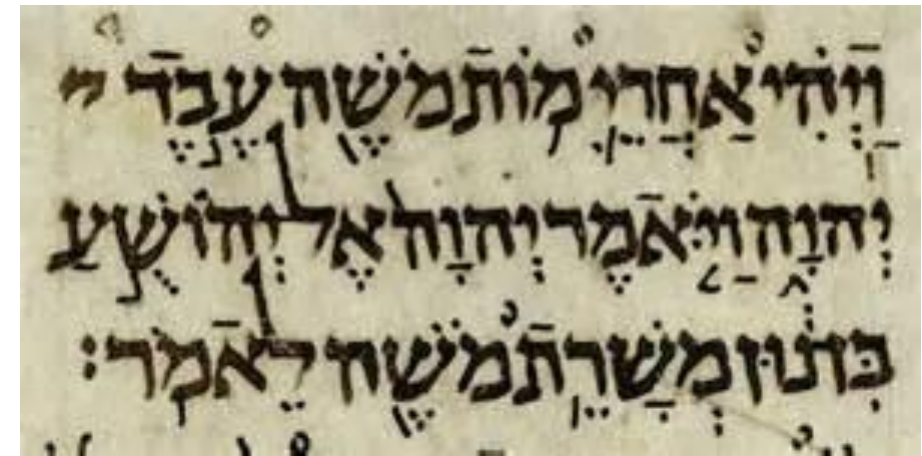
- Az írás nem része a nyelvnek:
  - Kulturális invenció
  - Nagyon sok nyelv nem rendelkezik írásbeliséggel.
  - Írásrendszer vagy helyesírás változása  $\neq$  nyelv változása
- Az ismert sémi nyelvek mindegyikét írásbeliséggel rendelkező kultúrában beszélték. Az írott nyelv normatív hatása befolyásolta a nyelv fejlődését.
- A „híres” sémi nyelvek rendelkeznek írásbeliséggel.
- A régebbi sémi nyelveket, ill. a sémi nyelvek régebbi állapotát csak írott forrásokból ismerjük.

# Mit kell (illik) tudnia egy sémi nyelvésznek az írásról?

- Készség: más írásrendszerrel publikált nyelvi adatokat elolvasni. (Nem mindig írják át nekünk.)
- Megérteni, hogy mely nyelv esetén milyen bizonytalanságot okoz az, hogy az adott nyelvi adatokhoz csak valamely írásrendszer „szemüvegén” keresztül férünk hozzá.
- Írásrendszerek kialakulása és története, paleográfia, az egyes írásrendszerek rokonsága: szerintünk nem, de a nem-nyelvészek szerint ez a terület a mi kompetenciánk.

# Az átírás folyamata

(V.ö. *Beyond Babel*, pp. 21-22)



!בן-נון? בתון

- Eredeti forrás, annak fotója, rajza.
- Írásjelek beazonosítása: א ב ג...
- Transzliteráció: átírás latin betűkkel úgy, hogy abból az eredeti írásmód még egyértelműen visszafejthető legyen. De a transzliteráció már részben értelmezés is. Például: בַּי = bēy vagy bê ?
- Normalizáció: mintha az adott nyelvnek létezne egy standard, a kiejtést (részben) tükröző, latinbetűs helyesírása. Az adott nyelvet nem ismerő olvasó számára is hozzáférhetővé válik a szöveg.
- Glossza: jelentés/funkció felsorolása, morfémaról morfémarra haladva. Például: *és-volt.Sg.3masc után halál.CONSTR Mózes rabszolga.CONSTR JHVH...*
- Fordítás modern nyelvre

Írástörténet

# From pictograms to a writing system

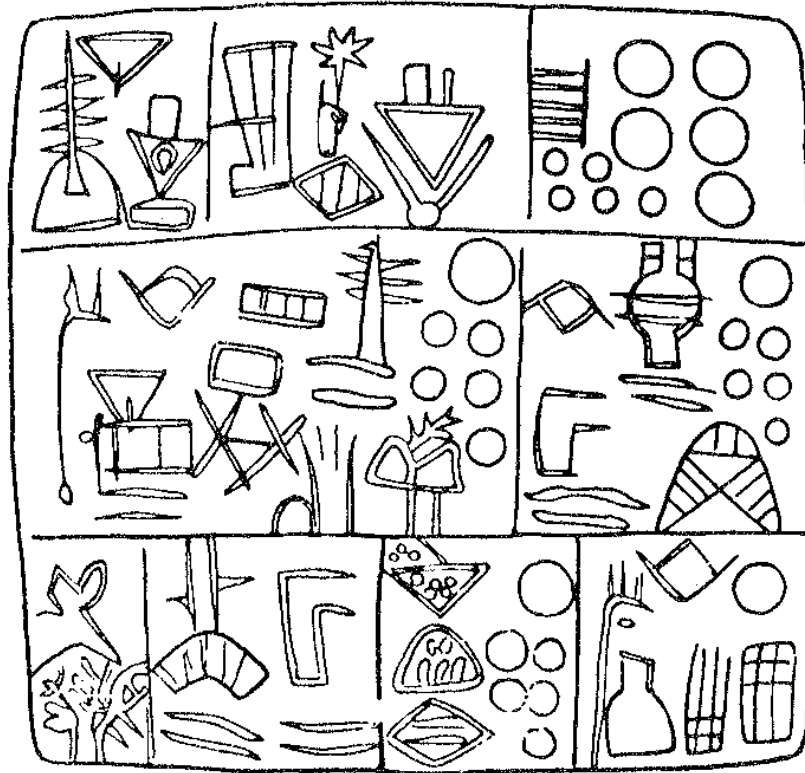


Fig. 2. Sumerian pictographic inscription

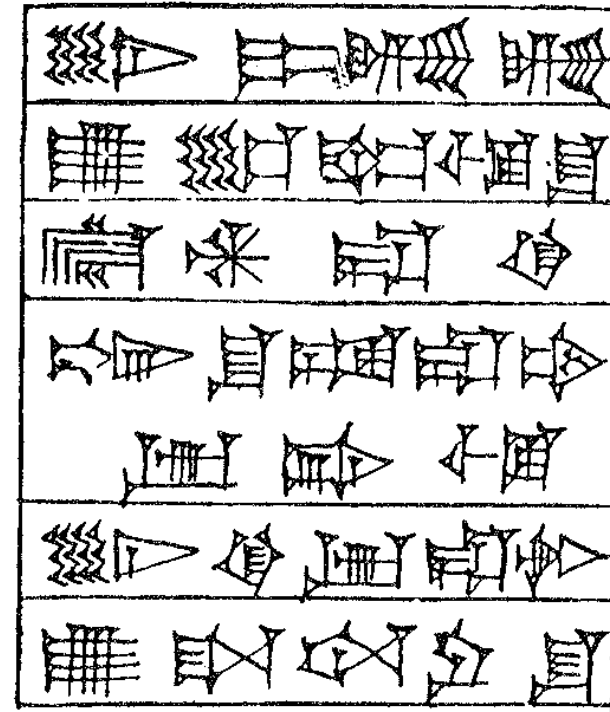


Fig. 3. Babylonian cuneiform text

# 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>s</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>k</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??
  - 17-16<sup>th</sup> 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	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 (12th) 𐤑 (10th)	𐤐	ḥê(-)	fence(?)
b	𐤒 𐤓	?	𐤒 (Jamme)	ḥa( )	hank of yarn
t	?	𐤔 (16th) 𐤕 (10th)	𐤔	tê(-)	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	𐤛 𐤜 𐤝 𐤞	𐤛 (14th) 𐤜 (13th)	𐤛 𐤜 (Jamme)	lamd-	ox-goad
m	𐤟 𐤠 𐤡	𐤟 (15th) 𐤠 (13th)	𐤟 (9th) 𐤠 (8th)	mêm-	water
n	𐤣 𐤤 𐤥	𐤣 (14th) 𐤤 (12th)	𐤣 𐤤 𐤥	nahš-	snake
s	?	𐤦 (10th)	𐤦 𐤧	(šamk-?)	?
c	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
ḏ	?	?	𐤲	?	?
q	𐤳 𐤴	𐤳 (14th) 𐤴 (10th)	𐤳 𐤴 (Jamme)	qu(p-)	?
r	𐤶 𐤷	𐤶 (16th-14th)	𐤶 𐤷	naʾš-	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:

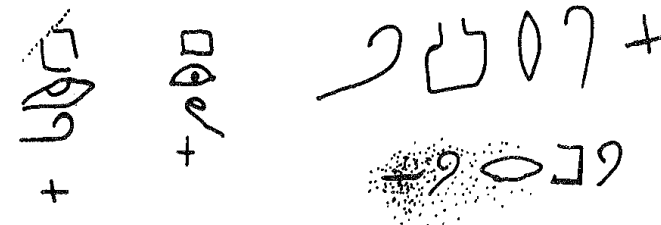


Fig. 16. The word (l)bt in the Proto-Sinaitic inscriptions

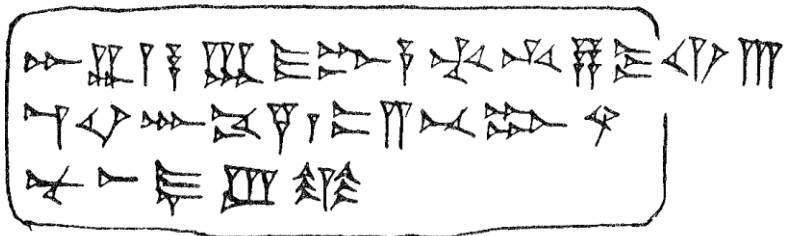


Fig. 25. An abecedarium from Ugarit

'a b g ḥ d h w z ḥ ṭ y k š l  
 m ḏ n z s ' p ṣ q r ṭ  
 ḡ t 'i 'u s<sub>2</sub>



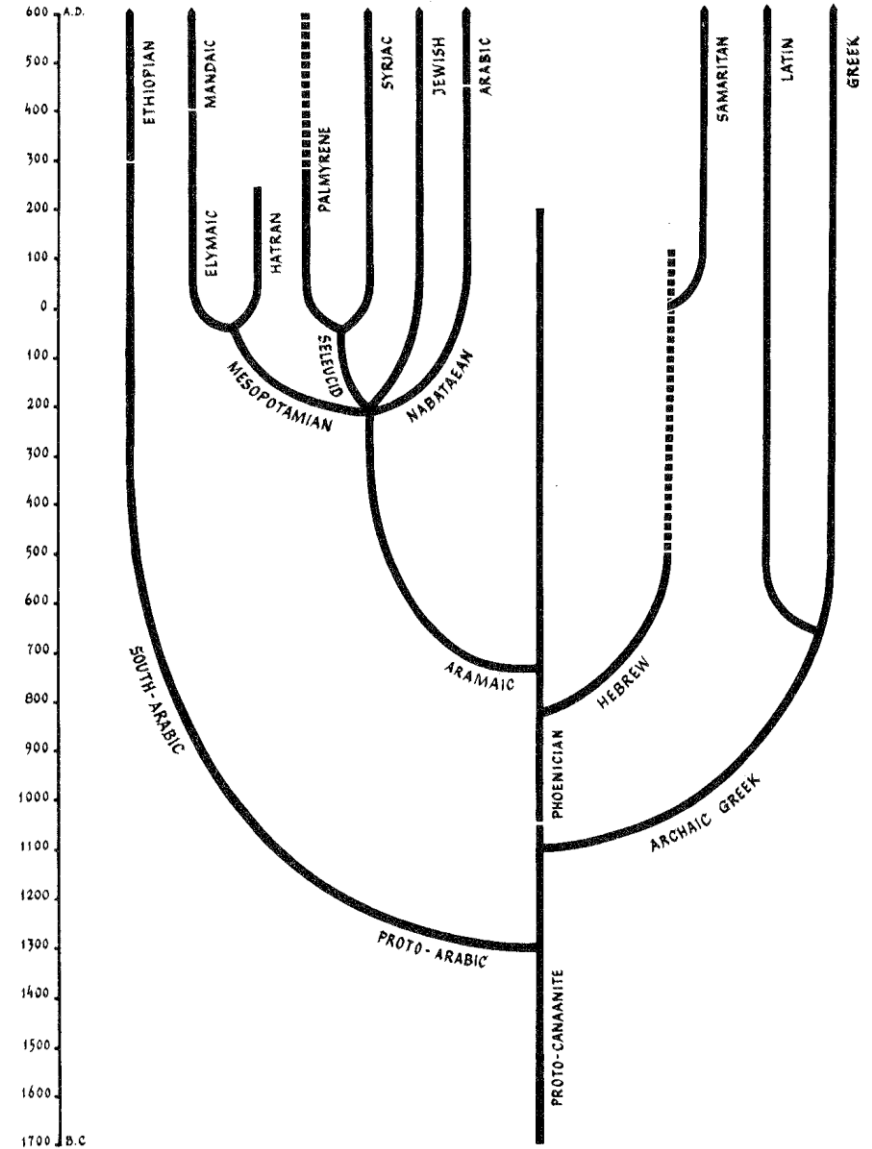
- Abecedarium from Ugarit: did order have ritual importance?

# Adopting a writing system to another language

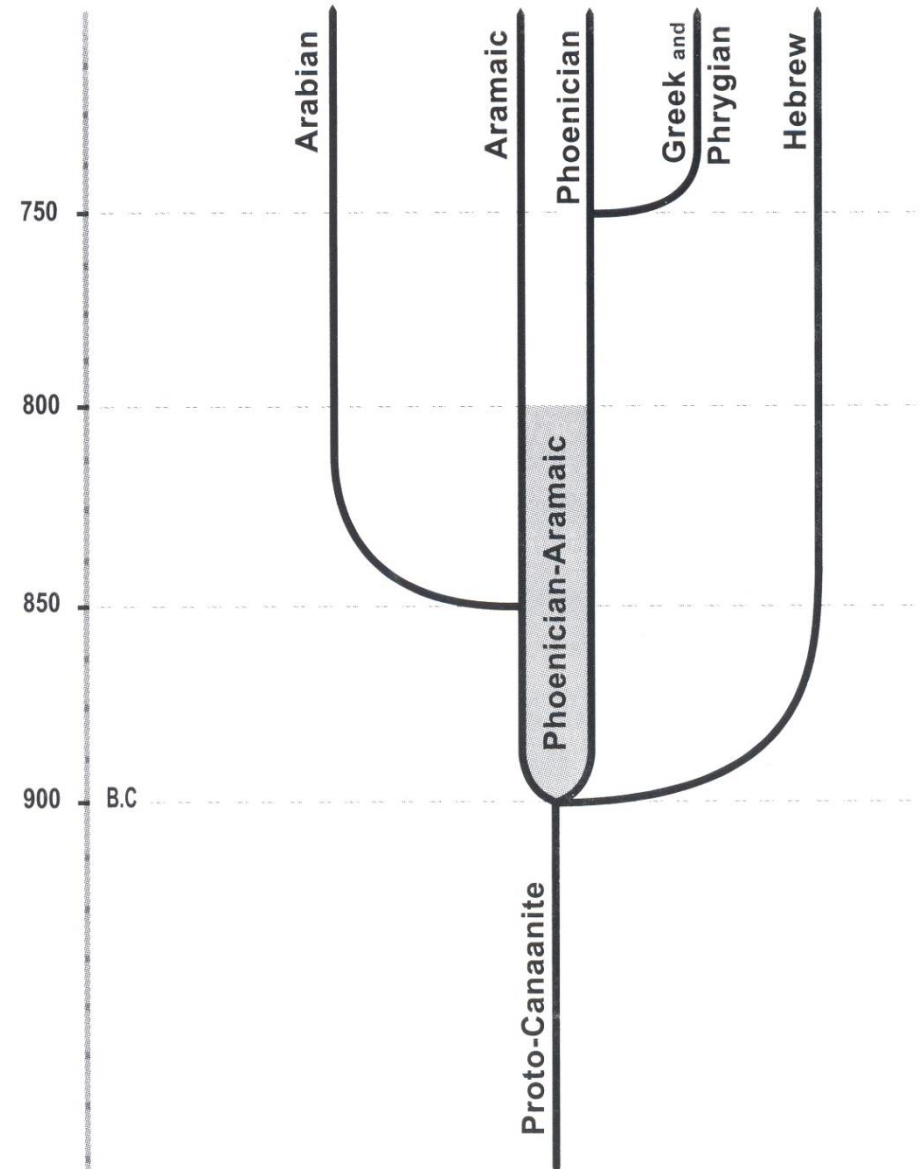
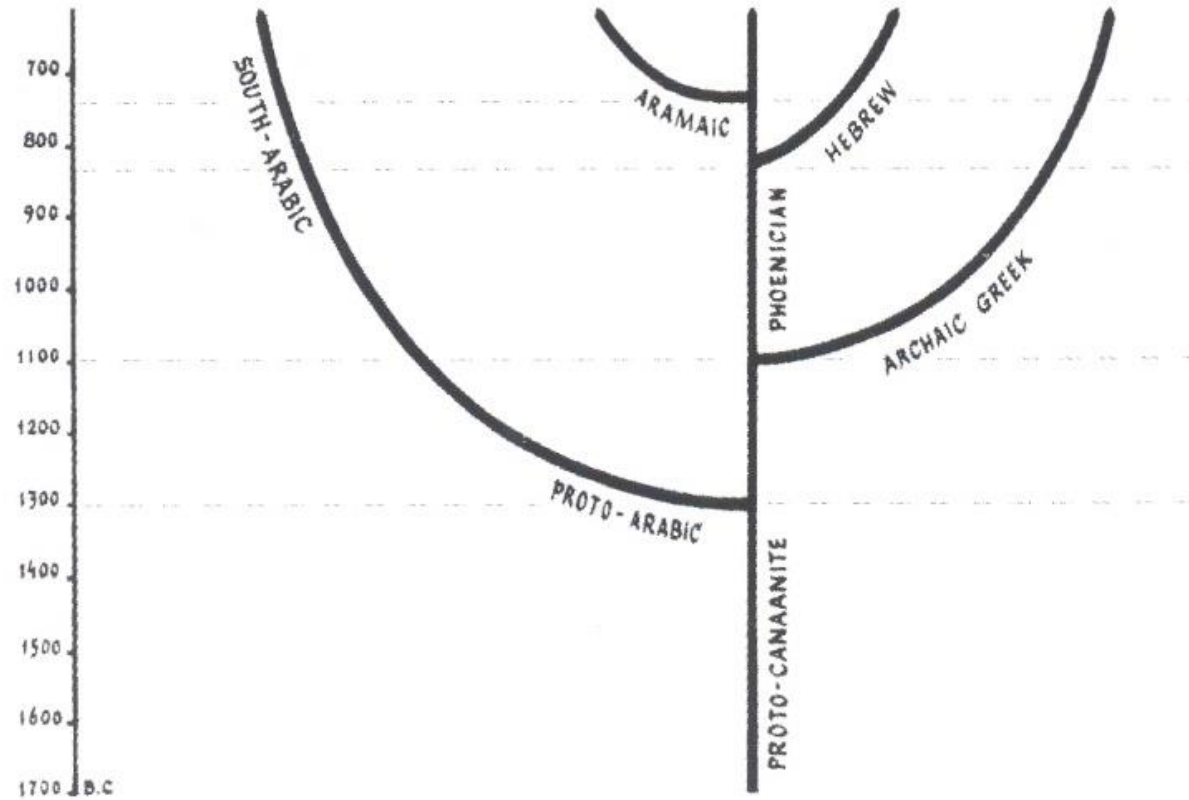
- Cuneiform: Sumerian => Akkadian => Ugaritic, Luwian, Hittite, Elamite, Persian, Old Canaanite
- Hieroglyphic: Egyptian => Luwian, etc.
- Phoenician => Greek => Latin => English, Dutch, French, Maltese (= Arabic dialect) etc.
- Hebrew => Judeo-languages
- Arabic => Persian, Turkish. Cyrillic, etc. to many languages
- Problems arising:
  - Different phonological systems: sounds not in source language (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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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



# Joseph Naveh 1982 vs. Benjamin Sass 2005



# Jewish scripts

אבגדהוזהטיכךלמם  
נוסעפףלזקרשת

- After Babylonian exile (587-539).
- Qumran, First Jewish War (66-70), Bar Kokhba's revolt (132-135): sporadic use of paleo-Hebrew script (as identity marker, national symbol?).
- Paleography: very different handwriting styles in medieval manuscripts (Italian, Yemenite, etc. etc. etc.)
- Ashkenazi cursive (hand writing) => Israeli cursive.
- Sefhardic cursive (hand writing): also used for Ladino.
  - “Rashi” script: 16<sup>th</sup> c., developed from Sefhardic 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: 10<sup>th</sup> century – 586 BCE

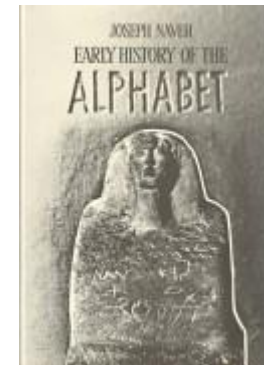
Epigraphy = study of inscriptions.

Found in archaeological excavations.

Using pre-exilic Hebrew script.

Some famous examples given below.

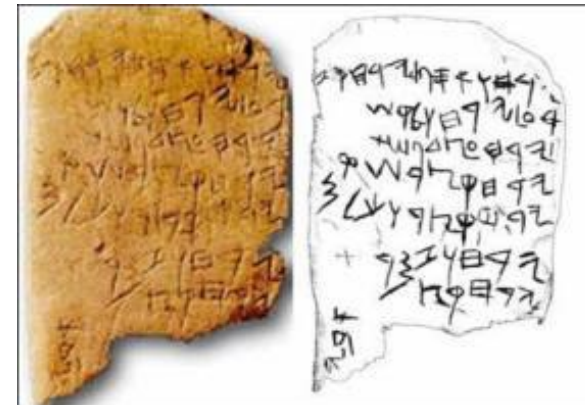
Recommended, even if not up-to-date introduction: Joseph Naveh. *Early History of the Alphabet*. Magnes Pr., 1987.



# The Gezer calendar

End of 10<sup>th</sup> 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: [http://www.truthnet.org/Bible-Origins/4\\_How\\_was\\_Bible\\_written/Gezer\\_Calendar\\_Hebrew.jpg](http://www.truthnet.org/Bible-Origins/4_How_was_Bible_written/Gezer_Calendar_Hebrew.jpg)

# The Mesha stele

9<sup>th</sup> century

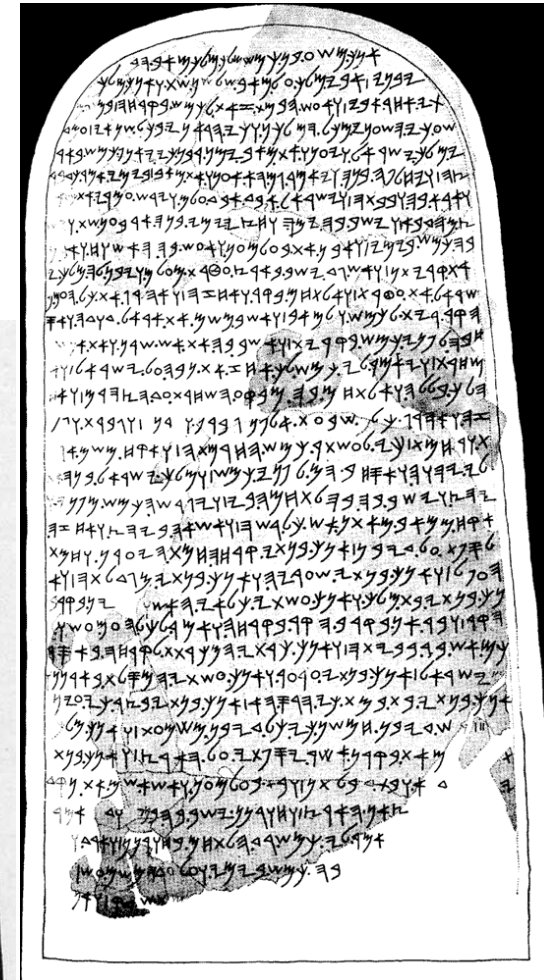
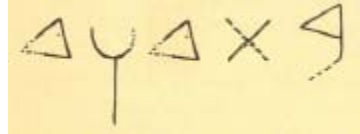
Moabite king's victory  
over house of David.

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.org>

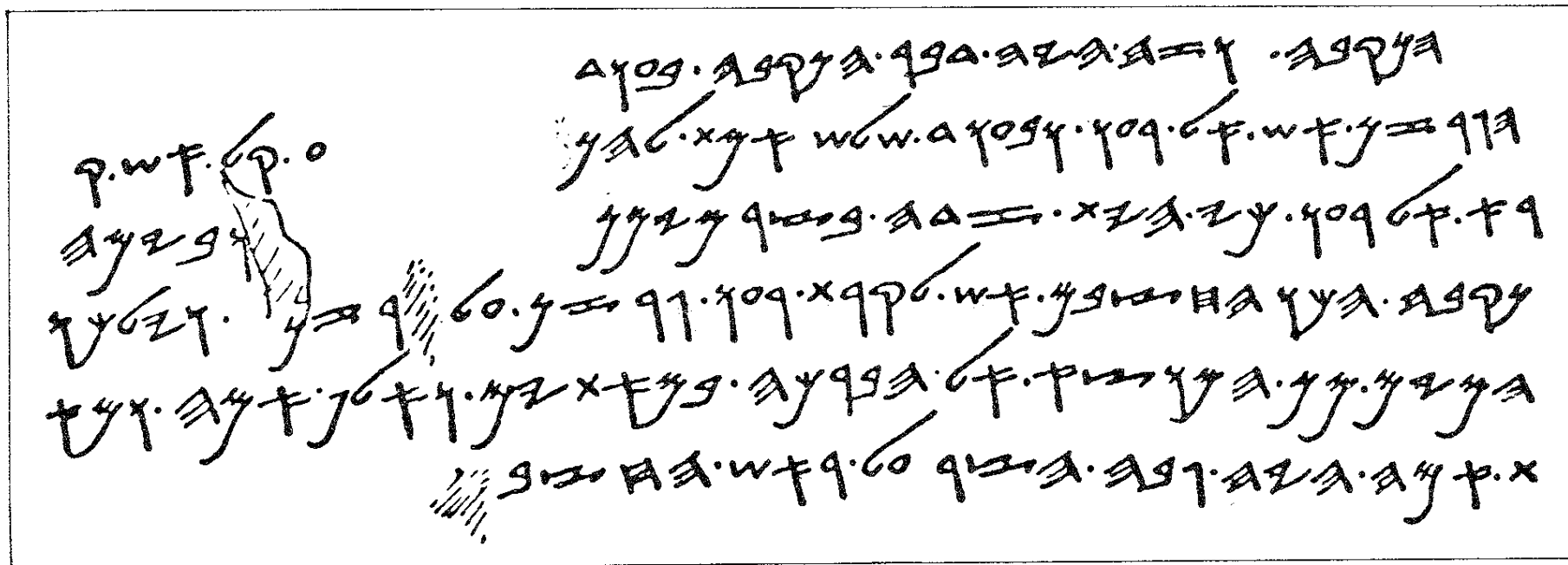
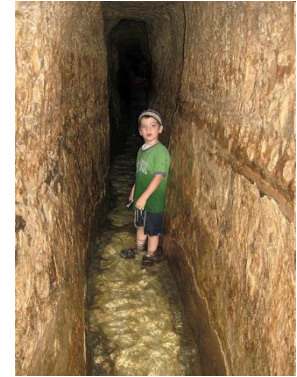
Source of images: <http://issachar5.files.wordpress.com>  
<http://vadym.web.cern.ch/vadym/images/MeshaSteleInscrip10cmh.gif>



[http://houseof david.ca/bd\\_mesha.jpg](http://houseof david.ca/bd_mesha.jpg)

# 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

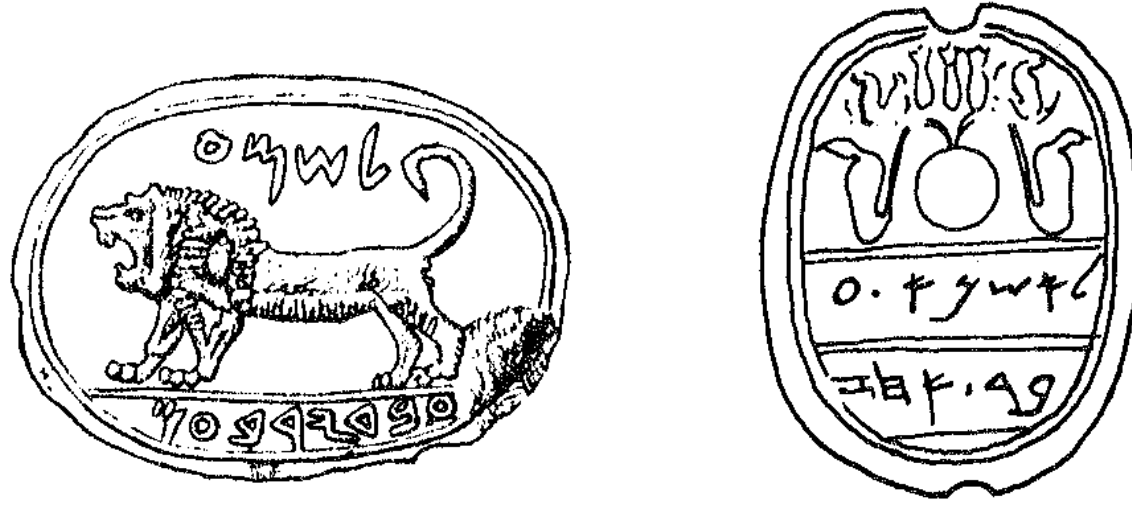


Fig. 64. Two Hebrew seals from the 8th century B.C.

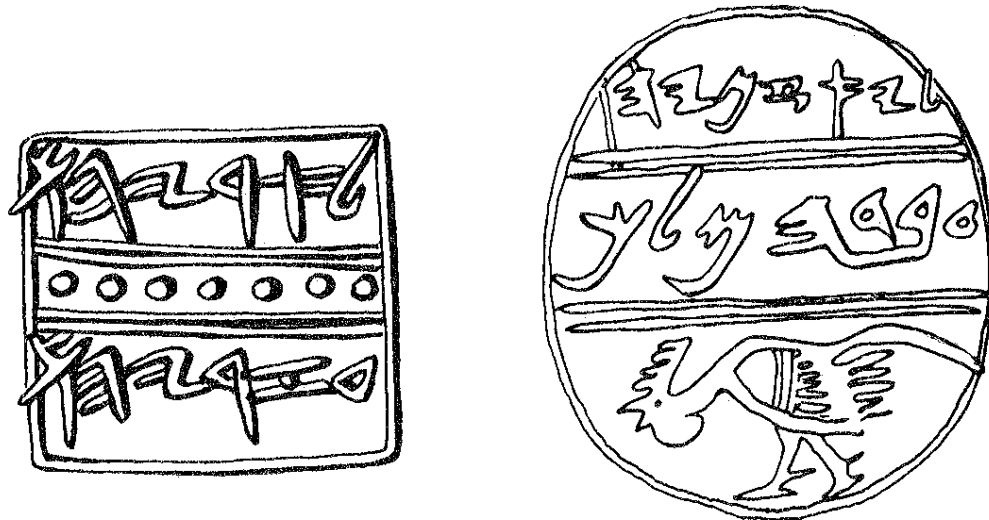


Fig. 61. Two Hebrew seals from the late 7th century B.C.

# Jar handles: *la-melekh* inscriptions



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

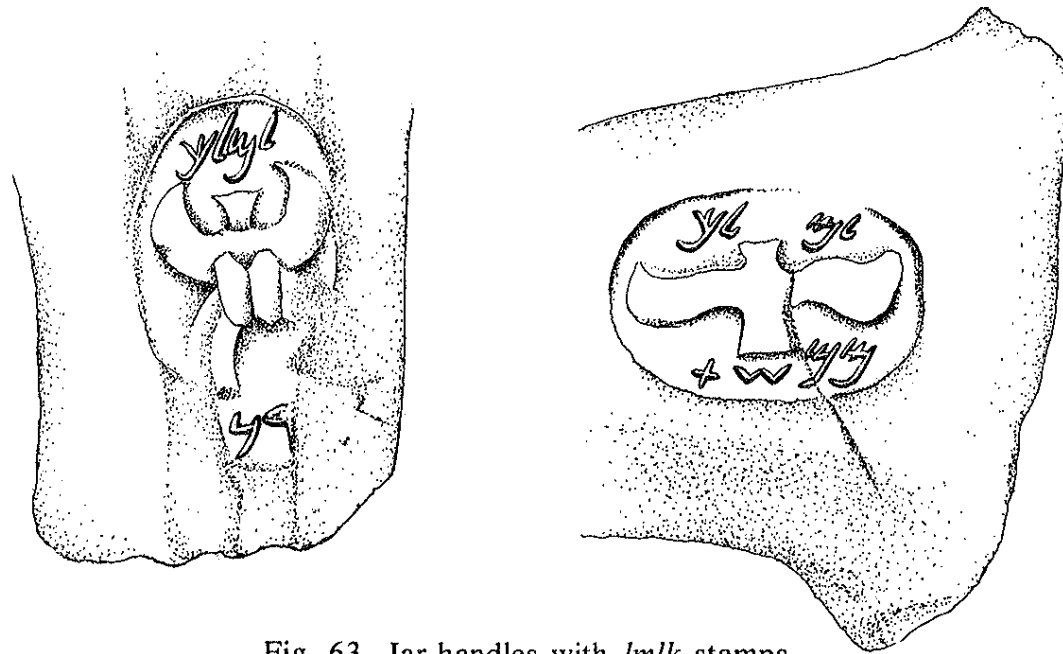


Fig. 63. Jar-handles with *lmlk* stamps

# Ostraca

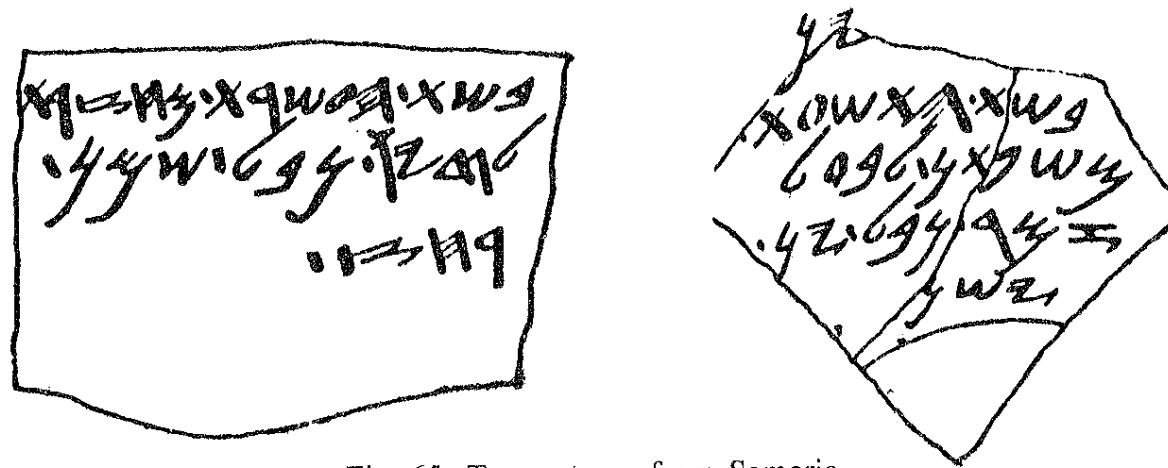


Fig. 65. Two ostraca from Samaria

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 (8<sup>th</sup> c.), Mesad Hashavyahu (late 7<sup>th</sup> c.: petition to the local governor), Arad (early 6<sup>th</sup> c.), Lachish (early 6<sup>th</sup> c.)...

# Ostraca

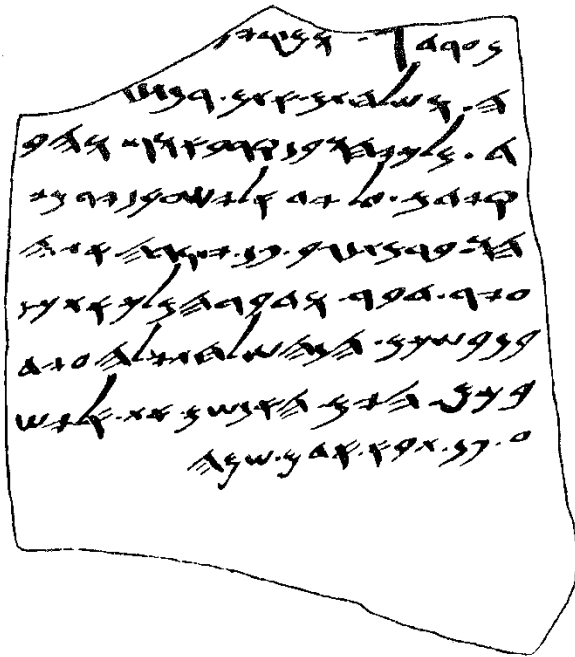


Fig. 66. An early 6th-century B.C. ostracum from Arad

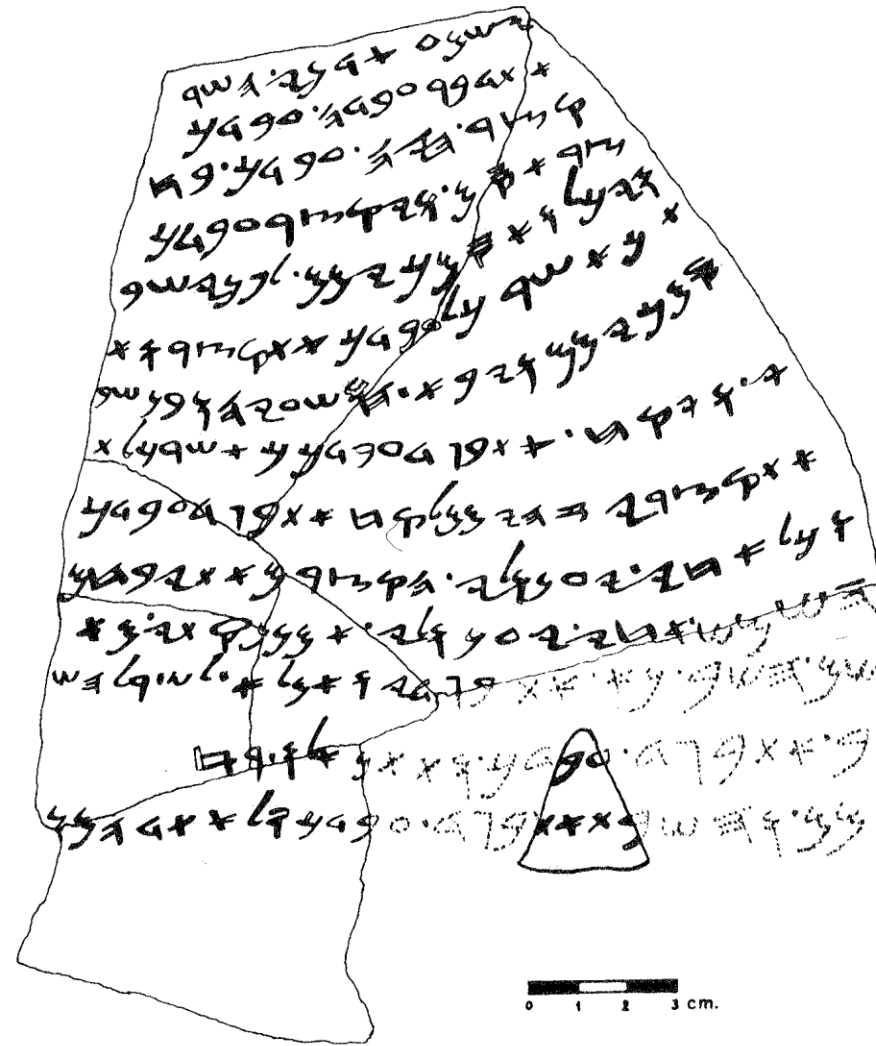
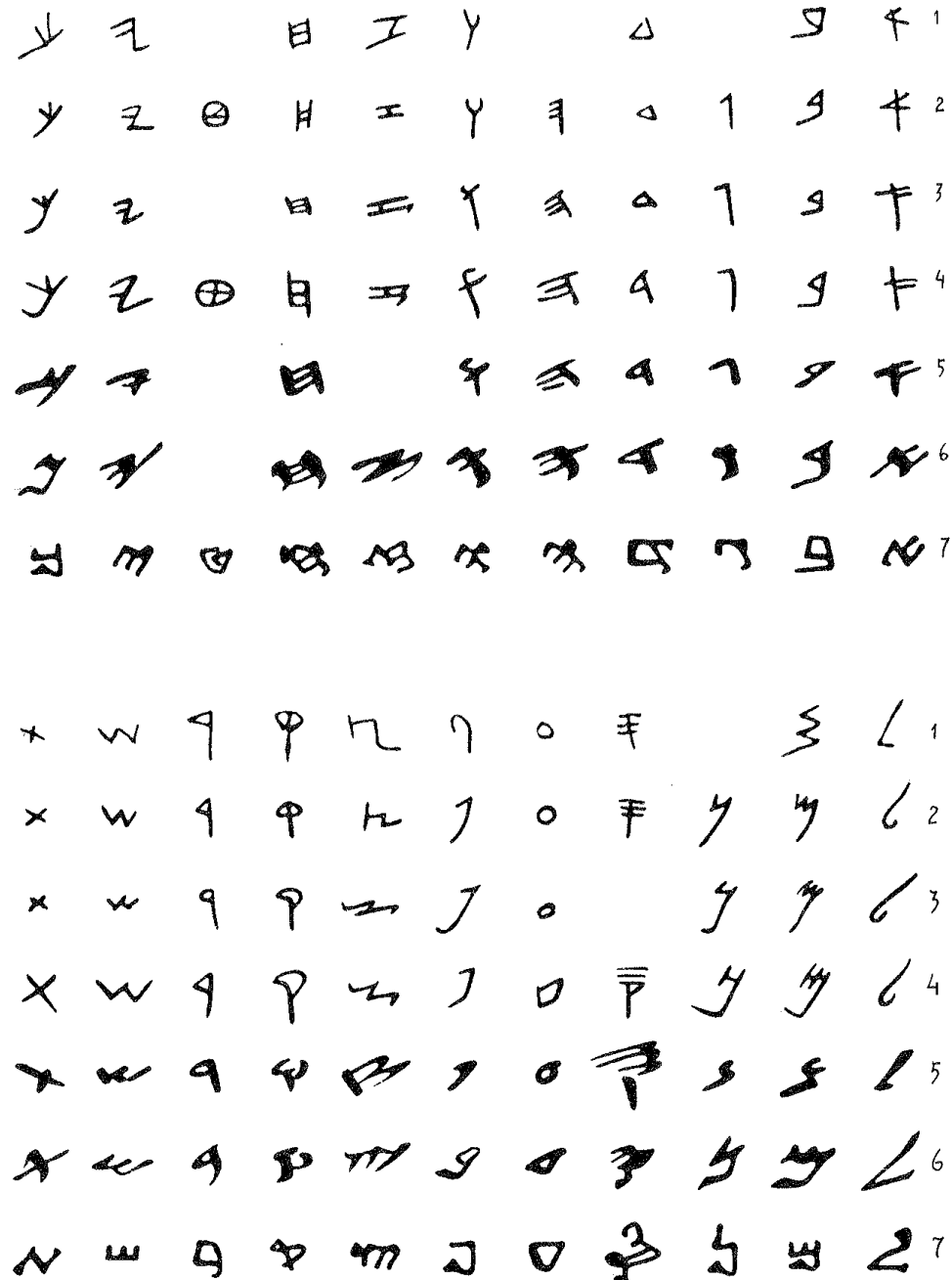


Fig. 67. Late 7th-century petition from Mešad Ḥašavyahu

# Overview:

Development of the  
Paleo-Hebrew script:

- 1. Gezer calendar: 10<sup>th</sup> c.
- 2. Mesha stele: 9<sup>th</sup> c.
- 3. Siloam inscription: late 8<sup>th</sup> c.
- 4. Seals from the 7<sup>th</sup> cent.
- 5. Arad ostraca: early 6<sup>th</sup> c.
- 6. Leviticus fragment:  
2<sup>nd</sup> 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. *bārēšit* (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 (10<sup>th</sup> 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 vs. 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*!

# A vizsgára még olvasandó

- Sémi nyelvek:      *Beyond Babel* 109–138 (Redford, „Egyptian”)  
                              *Beyond Babel* 183–206 (Hoffner, „Hittite”)

- Írástörténet:      Kálmán–Trón 121–122.  
                              Dévényi–Iványi 3–17.  
                              Bennett / Daniels, *Appendix*

- A vizsgára készülés során feldolgozandó:

Dobos Károly Dániel. *Sém fiai: A sémi nyelvek és a sémi írásrendszerek története* (Budapest: Pázmány Egyetem eKiadó, és Szent István Társulat, 2013). [23.1.Dob.1.]

*Köszönöm a féléves figyelmet!*