Hebrew origins

- Northwest Semitic language
- Canaanite subgroup
- Proto-Northwest-Semitic – reconstructed ancestor, based on Northwest Semitic languages as well as other closely related Semitic languages
- Classical/Biblical vs Modern Hebrew
Alef Bet

- Evolved from Phoenician writing system
- Abjad: Letters correspond to consonants
- Niqqud: Additional diacritics that indicate vowel sounds (mainly used in prayer books and for learning Hebrew)
Canaanite Shift

- Vowel shift in Proto-Northwest-Semitic, an ancestor of Hebrew
- a to o
- See Hebrew *shalom* vs Arabic *salamun*
# Canaanite Shift

## Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BH</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Cognates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>גונ</td>
<td>‘virility’</td>
<td>Ug. (an) ‘power’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>גור</td>
<td>‘light’</td>
<td>Ug. (ar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>גונ</td>
<td>‘nation’</td>
<td>Mari Akk. /gāʔum/ ‘gang’ (ws loan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>גד</td>
<td>‘beloved’, ‘uncle’</td>
<td>Akk. /dādu/ ‘beloved’, Arab. dādun ‘foster-father’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>גד</td>
<td>‘generation’</td>
<td>Aram. dār</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>גול</td>
<td>‘sand’</td>
<td>Aram. hāl ‘sand’, Arab. hālun ‘mud’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>גוב</td>
<td>‘good’</td>
<td>Aram. tāb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>גוס</td>
<td>‘cup’</td>
<td>Aram. kās, Arab. kaʔsun, Akk. /kāsu/ (see text)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>גול</td>
<td>‘voice’</td>
<td>Aram. Gā. qāl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>גש</td>
<td>‘thigh’</td>
<td>Aram. šāq, Arab. sāqun</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Infinitives

○ Additional development in Classical Hebrew
○ Abandonment of standalone infinitive use over time
Killing Hebrew

- Began to die as spoken language after the fall of the Second Temple in 70 CE
- Bar Kokhba revolt – As speakers killed, so too is language
- Continued use in prayer in Jewish communities
Mishnaic Hebrew

- Mishnah = Way back basis Jewish law
- In effort at preserving language, Rabbi Judah the Prince edited in Hebrew
- Basis of Talmud
Haskalah

- Jewish Enlightenment
- Hebrew language periodical (secular) (HaMeasef)
Hebrew Literature and the Recycling of words

- 19th Century – movement by Jewish writers and scholars to start writing non-religious literature in Hebrew
- Many words non-existent in religious documents
- Repurposing of biblical words
Cultural Zionism and the Hebrew Revival

- Medieval Hebrew as common language
- Eliezer Ben-Yehuda – Raised son as native Hebrew speaker
- Language council – often used Arabic for source words when no word could be found
- Hebrew-only Schools
- Challenges of resurrection – concepts that hadn’t existed in biblical times
References


