Old Testament Introduction
The Bible’s Buried Secrets
Chapter 12, Tel Zayit

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/ancient/bibles-buried-secrets.html>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qalTJzk4kO0>

***About the Video***

What is for the most part an exact copy of the video script follows. There are a few places where individual speakers could neither be heard nor understood: for this we apologize. Every effort was made to be precise: there were just spots that defeated us. Since this is a quote in its entirety it seemed unnecessary to mark it with quotation marks. The notation for each speaker is tedious enough: Narrator, Reader, etc. If you discover bothersome errors, please reply to this website and point them out. You may verify the script more easily by starting to replay it where the “time” stamps indicate discussion begins. The second of the above links is free from advertising and thus easier to use.

***Overview***

As with the Merneptah Stele, the Tel Zayit abjad tablet fails to live up to its advertised claims and expectations. Nothing at all was learned in answer to the question of when the Bible was written, except that parts of Leviticus were written prior to the mid fifth century, and that wasn’t learned from the Tel Zayit abjad tablet.[[1]](#endnote-1)

On the other hand, the Tel Zayit tablet is an abjad in the paleo-Hebrew script. This is the sort of device used in teaching others how to vocalize and read. In combination with the other evidence we will cite, this creates the strong impression that paleo-Hebrew is being invented around 1000 BC, and will develop into an abundant, highly developed literature after that date.

This fact suggests that the early books of the Bible were not written in paleo-Hebrew. Since period literature is well developed in other languages, which we demonstrated with the Amarna letters, as well as extensive libraries of Akkadian and Sumerian literature. Therefore, there is no good reason to suppose that Moses could not have written the first five books of the Bible in Akkadian Cuneiform, or any other of the contemporary languages. It is because of the strong testimony of the Amarna letters, roughly 382 known tablets;[[2]](#endnote-2) it is because of this strong Amarna testimony that we believe Moses first wrote in Akkadian Cuneiform; that his five books and others were translated into paleo-Hebrew shortly after 1000 BC; from there into block Aramaic (Hebrew)[[3]](#endnote-3) between 586-516 BC; finally, into Greek around 200 BC.

If we combine this with additional evidence, we might be warranted in concluding that all of Torah was written between 1406-1366 BC. That additional evidence would be, the internal testimony of the Bible itself, which thus far has demonstrated its accuracy with a very high reliability. Thus, provenance of the Bible answers the question, when nothing else does.

***Script***

The Tel Zayit ABJAD Tablet (time 16:30)

Quote:

N: But when did the process of writing the Bible begin?[[4]](#endnote-4) Tel Zayit is a small site on the south-western border of ancient Israel[[5]](#endnote-5) that dates back to biblical times.[[6]](#endnote-6) Since 1999 Ron Tappy[[7]](#endnote-7) has been excavating here. It was the last day of what had been a typical dig season.

Tappy: As I was taking aerial photographs from the cherry picker, a volunteer[[8]](#endnote-8) notified his square supervisor that he had thought he had seen some interesting marks, scratches, possibly letters incised in a stone.

N: Letters would be a rare find. So when he kneeled to look at the marks, Tappy got the surprise of a lifetime.

Tappy: As I bent down over the stone, I immediately saw very clear, very distinct letters.

N: Tappy excavated the rock and brought it back to his lab at the nearby kibbutz. It was only then that he realized he had more than a simple inscription.

Tappy: (א - ב - ג - ד …) I realized that this inscription represented an abecedary; that is to say, not a text narrative, but the letters of the Semitic alphabet written out in their correct order (נ - פ - ע… are difficult to read, but they’re out there).

N: This ancient script is an early form of the Hebrew alphabet.

McCarter: What was found was not a random scratching of two or three letters, it was the full alphabet. Everything about it says that this is the ancestor of the Hebrew script.[[9]](#endnote-9)

N: The Tel Zayit abecedary is the earliest Hebrew alphabet[[10]](#endnote-10) ever discovered. It dates to about 1000 BC,[[11]](#endnote-11) making it possible that writing the Hebrew Bible could have already started by this time. To discover the most ancient text in the Bible, scholars examine the Hebrew spelling, grammar, and vocabulary.[[12]](#endnote-12)

Unquote.

***Artifacts***

The Tel Zayit abecedary or abjad is only the second archaeological artifact presented in *The Bible’s Buried Secrets* thus far. The first was the Merneptah Stele, which we discovered was “much ado about nothing.”[[13]](#endnote-13) The rest of the material so far consists of a few Bible misrepresentations, and a lot of inane and mostly irrelevant filler, made falsely spectacular by the ingenious use of music and moving photography: “the medium is [not] the message.”[[14]](#endnote-14) The Tel Zayit abecedary or abjad is much touted as a spectacular find. Let’s examine this idea. Here are some related artifacts beginning with the Tel Zayit abjad itself:[[15]](#endnote-15)

* Tel Zayit abjad: Tel Zayit, Israel, was discovered in 2005 and its date is still under debate, but possibly tenth century BC.[[16]](#endnote-16)

“There is some debate over whether the forms of these letters are anticipatory of later developments in Hebrew and should thus be characterized as “Palaeo-Hebrew” or whether they lack such features and should be characterized as “Phoenician” or more generally “South Canaanite.”[[17]](#endnote-17)

* Ahiram Inscription: Byblos, Phoenicia, was discovered in 1923 and dates to 1000 BC. It is at least an important witness as the abjad.[[18]](#endnote-18)
* Yehimilik Inscription: Byblos, Phoenicia, was discovered in 1929 and dates to around 950 BC.[[19]](#endnote-19)
* Samaria Ivories: Samaria, Israel, were discovered in 1908-1935 and date to the ninth or eighth centuries BC.[[20]](#endnote-20)
* Gezer Calendar: Gezer, Israel, was discovered in 1908 and dates to 925 BC.[[21]](#endnote-21)
* Moabite Stone: Dibon, Jordan, was discovered in 1868 and dates to around 840 BC.[[22]](#endnote-22)
* Kilamuwa Inscription: Sam’al, Turkey, was discovered in 1888-1902 and dates to the ninth century BC.[[23]](#endnote-23)
* Samaria Ostraca: Sebastia, Nablus (Israel), were discovered in 1910 and date to 850-750 BC[[24]](#endnote-24)
* Shema Seal: Megiddo, Israel, was discovered in 1904 and dates to either the tenth or the eighth centuries BC, depending on whether it connects to Jeroboam I or Jeroboam II.[[25]](#endnote-25)
* Stele of Zakkur, was discovered in 1903 and dates to 805-775 BC.[[26]](#endnote-26)
* Bar Rakab Inscription, was known as early as 1898 and dates to 750-701 BC[[27]](#endnote-27)
* Siloam Inscription: Jerusalem, Judea, was discovered in 1880 and dates to 700 BC[[28]](#endnote-28)
* Nerab Stelae: 600-550 BC[[29]](#endnote-29)
* Pharaoh Letter: ca 601 BC[[30]](#endnote-30)
* Lachish Ostraca: Lachish, Judea, were discovered in 1935 and date to 590 BC[[31]](#endnote-31)
* Jewish Seals: sixth century BC[[32]](#endnote-32)
* Bauer-Meissner Papyrus: el-Hibeh, Egypt, were discovered in 1936 and date to 515 BC[[33]](#endnote-33)
* Leviticus Fragments: Desert, Judea, were discovered in 2004 and date to mid fifth century BC[[34]](#endnote-34)

“These texts [4QpaleoExodm and 11QpaleoLeva], rather than preceding writing in the square script, were actually written at a relatively late period, probably as a natural continuation of the tradition of writing in the “early” Hebrew script, and were concurrent with the use of the square script.

“While it is tacitly assumed by most scholars that with the revival of the paleo-Hebrew script in the Hasmonean period, texts were transformed from the square to the paleo-Hebrew script, it would be more natural to assume that the habit of writing in the paleo-Hebrew script had never ceased through the centuries.”[[35]](#endnote-35)

* Elephantine Papyri: Elephantine and Syene, Egypt, were first discovered in 1893 and date to ca 400 BC and earlier.[[36]](#endnote-36)
* Eshmunazar Sarcophagus: Sidon, Phoenicia, was discovered in 1855 and dates to 500 BC.[[37]](#endnote-37)

“The language used in the inscription is a Canaanite dialect mutually intelligible with Biblical Hebrew.”[[38]](#endnote-38)

A few items of interest, from this list, have caught our attention. Some of these items are old enough to contest the abjad claim of being oldest: namely, Ahiram, Yehimilik, Gezer, and Shema; all equally datable to the tenth century... Gezer is especially impressive. Some of these items have passed from “scholarly” interest and can only be found in older reports: reports that have long since passed away from the public eye. This highlights the error of majoring in the spectacular: there may very well be better finds in the British Museum; finds, long forgotten due to the lapse of time and interest. Lack of support for a few artifacts, raises the question if one or two of them might be forgeries: but, again, the modern “scholarly” community is mostly silent.

***Calligraphy***

Since what used to be called the Phoenician script is now called the paleo-Hebrew script we see that any differences must be classed as minor dialectical variances.[[39]](#endnote-39) Considering the ordinary differences of calligraphy between scribes this could be one language, the lip of Canaan.[[40]](#endnote-40) The principle difference between this Canaanite language, paleo-Hebrew, Phoenician, and what we know as Hebrew today appears to be the printing in Aramaic block script.[[41]](#endnote-41)

***Canaan’s Lip***

So, what we call Hebrew actually may be Canaanite: it does not make a lot of sense to believe that coexistent ethnicities would retain two distinct languages. This could create the mistaken impression that the Israelites are actually Canaanites. Yet, if the Israelites are actually Canaanites in 1200 BC, as *The Bible’s Buried Secrets* will later suggest, why would they go to such pains to distinguish and separate themselves: the force to apartheid can only be explained by strong ethnic differences, not by ethnic sameness.

***Phoenicia***

Moreover, there seems to be some dispute over the origin of the Phoenicians: some opine that they are Hamitic, while others insist that they are Semitic. We have not been able to identify them with any certainty from the Table of Nations. It appears that Put fails to fit. So the origins of the Phoenicians remains a mystery. Nevertheless, the geography pleads for a common language. Measuring from Jerusalem, Tyre is 103 miles, Sidon is 123 miles, Byblos is 164 miles. In contrast, Tyre is 1,437 miles from Carthage, but that didn’t deter the Phoenicians from settling their colony there. Since the Phoenician cities developed from north to south (Byblos, Sidon, Tyre), this may argue in favor of a Semitic origin coming into the Promised Land along with the same general migration as Abram.[[42]](#endnote-42) In any case the distances are so short as to support a common language by whatever name.

***Evidence***

Since the Tel Zayit artifact is nothing more than an abjad, it establishes nothing more than that paleo-Hebrew script was in use at that place and time. It has no other provenance than that it is an abecedary and was used to build a wall. Dating methods were not disclosed. It especially does not establish the existence of Torah, or that Torah would necessarily be written in paleo-Hebrew around 1000. As with the Merneptah Stele, its value is grossly overstated. At most it pushes back the date for the existence of the paleo-Hebrew language by a few years.[[43]](#endnote-43) The information it conveys is already known from several other sources.

The Tel Zayit abjad has absolutely nothing to say about, “when … the process of writing the Bible [began].” As far as that goes none of these artifacts, provides an answer to such a question at all. At most, all we can say is that Leviticus fragments were already extant in the mid fifth century.[[44]](#endnote-44)

***Conclusion***

As with the Merneptah Stele, the Tel Zayit abjad fails to live up to its advertised claims and expectations. Nothing at all was learned in answer to the question of when the Bible was written, except that parts of Leviticus were written prior to the mid fifth century.[[45]](#endnote-45) If we combine this with additional evidence we might be warranted in concluding that all of Torah was written prior to the mid fifth century, and probably a good long time before. That additional evidence would be the internal testimony of the Bible itself, which thus far has demonstrated its accuracy with a very high reliability. Thus, provenance answers the question, when nothing else does. Without provenance, we know nothing. If unknown, provenance must be reconstructed from other evidence.

Is the purpose of this video to examine evidence; or is the purpose of this video to tamper with that evidence?

[[46]](#endnote-46)

1. Even this is based on a single opinion that can no longer be traced to firm dating. Later the Gabriel Barkay silver scrolls found in tombs near Jerusalem will be introduced and discussed: they may provide a seventh century date for their contents. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Sadly, we have been able to locate English language translations for only a few of these 382 tablets. What we did find was well worth reading. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. The misnomer, Hebrew, haunts us. The alphabetic writing is Aramaic; evidently, the paleo-Hebrew vocalization was retained for these Aramaic letters, when read by scholars and scribes. However, Ezra and Nehemiah assure us that few of the people understood paleo-Hebrew any longer: so, the Bible readings had to be translated into the vernacular Aramaic, understood by the common people (Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5, 7-8; 9:3). [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Most certainly not at Tel Zayit with an abjad. Consider the use of an abjad in any culture or language. An abjad is what is used to teach small children, as well as others learning a second language, the first rudiments of literacy. Look around your own house to discover how many abjads you own; they will most likely be found in the nursery: in contrast to the other literature you own, abjads will be insignificant to none. It is the fact that no known literature has been found in chronological or geographical association with the abjads, which leads us to believe that paleo-Hebrew is a newly invented language. It is interesting that we have a whole 382 tablet Amarna library (1350-1330 BC) with letters from all over Anatolia, Levant, and Mesopotamia, written in Akkadian Cuneiform; yet as far as paleo-Hebrew is concerned, only silence, and that silence is coming three and a half centuries after Amarna.

Are we to suppose that the fictitious falsifiers of Scripture, known as P (500 BC), without any evidence or knowledge of Amarna, concocted a story about writing on stone (Joshua 8:30-32), when none of the P editors could have had any memory of such writing on stone? Nor have any known artifacts survived. Are we to suppose that this concoction was all invented from Babylonian libraries? Are we to suppose from this sort of concoction that the Israelites in 1350, 1200, or 1000 BC, did not really know about writing on stone or on clay tablets? When, in fact, their Canaanite neighbors did commonly write on clay in 1350 BC. There is no mere coincidence operating here: the Amarna evidence is overwhelming.

There is no demonstrable reason to doubt that “the process of writing the Bible” did not begin in 1406 BC in Akkadian Cuneiform. There is every reason to doubt that such a beginning was ever made in paleo-Hebrew, in Hebrew, or in any other form of alphabetic writing. Alphabetic writing in any language, simply did not develop as early as 1406 BC. In earlier chapters, we have examined the earliest known claims for alphabetic writing. When we examined photographs of such artifacts, we discovered that they were still pictographs or other symbols: there was no substantial evidence that they were alphabetic at all. Additionally, there are few to no cultural connections with these alleged early alphabets. It may very well be that alphabetic writing developed from the borrowing of such symbols to represent the new, growing alphabetic invention, just as Akkadian definitely did develop an alphabet using cuneiform symbols. Judging by the evidence we now have, there is no reason to believe that paleo-Hebrew was invented prior to 1000 BC. Now, new discoveries could change that analysis. On the other hand, pictographic elements still cling to the paleo-Hebrew abjad: aleph is a crude representation of an ox, bet or beth is a house, gimel is a camel, and so on.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UiCzoTs1AdE>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YzjHjXe-2XU>

Not to be outdone… the Greeks were inventing their own alphabetic language at about the same time.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tFI55WDN6Hs>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VOSvqiaJN2c>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KM4Ma4mgzHU> [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Tel Zayit is near Gath and was possibly part of Philistine territory. It has tentatively been identified with either Libnah or Ziklag; this being said, it appears that Tel Zayit seems too far north to be the site of Libnah. Lachish should be about twelve miles south of Tel Zayit. Libnah might be north of Lachish, because Joshua attacked Libnah first, yet not certainly so. Suffice it to say that we have not yet identified Tel Zayit, nor located either Libnah or Ziklag [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. What the evidence of the Tel Zayit abjad tablet establishes is that the latest possible date for the invention of the paleo-Hebrew alphabetic language is 1000 BC at this time: additional discoveries could move this date backward, but not forward in time. The Tel Zayit abjad tablet provides absolutely no evidence whatsoever, with which to date the writing of the Bible. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Ron E. (and Connie) Tappy, is a professor at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. Works: Tel Zayit, datable Hebrew alphabet (1000-901).

<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/11/09/international/middleeast/09alphabet.html?module=Search&mabReward=relbias%3Aw%2C%5B%22RI%3A11%22%2C%22RI%3A14%22%5D&_r=1&>

<http://www.pts.edu/tappyr> [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Dan Rypma

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zayit_Stone#History>

<http://historynewsnetwork.org/article/18992> [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. This is disputed, whether it is paleo-Hebrew or Phoenician. For that matter, what is the difference between them, and how do they differ from ordinary everyday Canaanite (the lip of Canaan, Isaiah 19:18)? The difference between paleo-Hebrew and Hebrew is that paleo-Hebrew appears to be the more cursive form; whereas Hebrew is the more formal hand lettered calligraphy form. There is evidence that both of these forms existed side-by-side for centuries. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. This is a false statement. It is “the ancestor”, not the thing: whether Canaanite, paleo-Hebrew, or Phoenician. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. How was it dated? It’s a rock. Doubtless, the only way to date a rock is by its relationship in layers to other evidence; evidence of destruction by fire might contain datable hydrocarbons; a well-known battle might provide other chronological links: but a bare rock cannot be dated. Once a bare rock is removed from its location, even that line of evidence is destroyed. Science does not proceed with the disturbance of the crime scene, or with the loss of the chain of evidence. Thank God, Tappy and his team are careful scientists, documenting every step of the excavation process, not carelessly blundering around as some have done.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zayit_Stone> [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. “… scholars examine the Hebrew spelling, grammar, and vocabulary,” of what? Surely, not the paleo-Hebrew spelling, grammar, and vocabulary of the Tel Zayit abjad! Notice how slyly and smoothly this last sentence is eased into the conversation. One second we are discussing a significant artifact, with its potential applications; the next second we are discussing the skill of epigraphers as they “examine the Hebrew spelling, grammar, and vocabulary” … “To discover the most ancient text in the Bible. The self-contradictory flaw in this argument is that we are not examining biblical text, we are examining an abjad: now how, pray tell, does one milk Hebrew spelling, grammar, and vocabulary out of an abjad? The idea is being sold by chicanery and subterfuge that what can only be learned from hand written texts in their original artifacts, can somehow be gleaned from modern copies and printed documents. This is akin to attempting handwriting analysis from the electrons on this page: it is simply impossible, even inconceivable. It is outrageous to even suggest such a thing. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. a title of one of William Shakespeare’s plays

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Much_Ado_About_Nothing> [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. an expression coined by Marshall McLuhan [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Inscriptions represented artistically by sketches in ANEP, pages 88 and 281f; plate 286

<https://linearbknossosmycenae.wordpress.com/2015/04/28/comparison-between-the-paleo-hebrew-alphabets-and-hieratic-egyptian-the-phoenician-alphabet-click-to-enlarge/>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Byblos_syllabary>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paleo-Hebrew_alphabet>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proto-Sinaitic_script>

<http://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/biblical-artifacts/inscriptions/precursor-to-the-paleo-hebrew-script-discovered-in-jerusalem/>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ugaritic_alphabet> [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zayit_Stone>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tel_Zayit>

<http://zeitah.net/>

<http://www.zeitah.net/2013%20Brochure.pdf> [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zayit_Stone> [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. Since Hiram, possibly a family name, was close friends with David and Solomon, we would connect Hiram and Ahiram, possibly as brothers or cousins. Byblos and Tyre are both Phoenician cities and not far apart. Although the lettering is Phoenician, the similarity of calligraphy with Hebrew is remarkable. Incidentally a son or grandson of Benjamin is named Ahiram (Numbers 26:38), which may indicate a close association between the Benjamites and the Phoenicians. 2 Samuel 5:11; 1 Kings 5:1, 2, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 18; 7:13, 40, 45; 1 Kings 9:11, 12, 14, 27; 10:11, 22; 1 Chronicles 14:1

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahiram_sarcophagus>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Byblos>

<http://www.bible-history.com/geography/ancient-israel/israel-old-testament.html>

<http://www.academia.edu/612542/On_the_Linguistic_Dating_of_the_Phoenician_Ahiram_Inscription>

<http://www.phoenician.org/byblos_sidon_tyre.htm> [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. Very possibly Hebrew is nothing more than a dialect or variation of the Canaanite language. Isaiah 19:18

<http://phoenicianlanguage.com/phoenician-inscriptions/> [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samaria#Archaeology>

<http://www.allaboutarchaeology.org/samaria.htm>

<http://www.ancient-origins.net/ancient-places-asia/ivory-palace-king-ahab-001576> [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gezer_calendar> [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mesha_Stele> [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kilamuwa_Stela>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sam%27al> [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samaria_Ostraca> [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. Also discovered are the seals of Asaph (1906), Haman (1931), and Elamar (1935).

<http://www.academia.edu/3167575/Gate_1567_at_Megiddo_and_the_Seal_of_Shema_Servant_of_Jeroboam> [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stele_of_Zakkur> [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. Supporting information was not found.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Felix_von_Luschan> [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siloam_inscription> [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. Supporting information was not found.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georges_Contenau> [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. Supporting information was not found.

<http://www.persee.fr/web/revues/home/prescript/article/syria_0039-7946_1949_num_26_1_8410_t1_0152_0000_4>

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3209182?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents> [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lachish_letters> [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. Supporting information was not found.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Diringer> [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/1357232.pdf?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents>

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3822103?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents> [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. Emanuel Tov only discusses Qumran texts for Leviticus, so this date may be questionable.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roland_de_Vaux>

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1355948?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents>

<http://booksandjournals.brillonline.com/content/journals/10.1163/156851706776205941>

<http://www.emanueltov.info/docs/papers/10.bibletexts.2008.pdf> [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. <http://www.emanueltov.info/docs/papers/10.bibletexts.2008.pdf>, page 17 [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. The shear quantity and scope (hieratic, Demotic, Aramaic, Greek, Latin and Coptic) makes these papyri significant and worthy of further study.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elephantine_papyri>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elephantine>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aswan> [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eshmunazar_II_sarcophagus> [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. ibid [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phoenician_language>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canaanite_languages>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Semitic_languages> [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
40. What Isaiah suggests to us is that, what we mistakenly call Hebrew, is actually Canaanite. This puts to rout any hypothesis that Hebrew and/or Aramaic are some kind of hyper-spiritual languages, the only languages fit for biblical records: which is a roundabout way of claiming that Greek cannot be a biblical language; even less, any other language. Isaiah 19:18 [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
41. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aramaic_alphabet> [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
42. The argument would be over whether the Israelites spoke Canaanite, or whether the Canaanites spoke Hebrew, or whether it is even possible to know the difference. In other words, is Hebrew, and therefore paleo-Hebrew, either Hamitic and Canaanitic, or Semitic and Hebrew in origin? Does it really matter at all? Are the differences really that great, or are we just splitting hairs over nothing?

The general migratory assumption is that Hamitic and Japhethitic and tribes migrated away from Mesopotamia first. Hamitic tribes settled generally to the south and were already well established there as massive empires. Japhethitic tribes settled generally to the north and were also well established, but less is known about them at very early dates. The Semitic migration which may have swept both Abraham and the Phoenicians along in its flow would seem to indicate a common language and origin. If this happened to be the case, it would be very important to the situation: for it would indicate that resident Canaanites were overwhelmed by immigrating Semites and forced to learn a language that differed from their original Hamitic hieroglyphic tongue. [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
43. In comparison with artifacts such as the Ahiram Inscription, Yehimilik Inscription, and Gezer Calendar it may not push the dating back at all. [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
44. This is based on accepting the claim of ANEP at face value. However, Emanuel Tov may disagree. It doesn’t really matter which date is correct: the point is that we have no right to overstate what the evidence presents. A fragment of Leviticus presents that fragment of Leviticus and nothing more. The date, whatever it is, presents that date and nothing more. The fragment was in existence at such and such a date. In order to draw additional conclusions we must apply additional evidence. We cannot conclude that a fragment of Leviticus presents an extant copy of Leviticus as a whole if we have no strong reason to believe that Leviticus existed as a whole. ANEP, pages 88 and 281; plate 286

<http://www.emanueltov.info/docs/papers/10.bibletexts.2008.pdf> [↑](#endnote-ref-44)
45. Even this is based on a single opinion that can no longer be traced to firm dating. Later the Gabriel Barkay silver scrolls found in tombs near Jerusalem will be introduced and discussed: they may provide a seventh century date for their contents. [↑](#endnote-ref-45)
46. If you have been blessed or helped by any of these meditations, please repost, share, or use any of them as you wish. No rights are reserved. They are designed and intended for your free participation. They were freely received, and are freely given. No other permission is required for their use. [↑](#endnote-ref-46)