

SCRIPT AND LANGUAGE

It seems that scholars are unanimous in regarding the Phoenician script and language as nearly complete in identity with those of the ancient Hebrew. The same alphabetic letters are used in both languages, and most scholars tend to refer to the alphabetic script as "the Canaanite–Hebrew script". and to regard the language in both as different dialects of the same language.¹ The pronunciation of consonants and syllables, to our best knowledge, was identical.² Perrot who differentiates between Hebrews and Phoenicians remarks though, that "they spoke almost the same language",³

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- 1 Rawlinson, *Phoenicia*, p. 327.
Harden, *The Phoenicians*, p. 116
Dahood, *Ugaritic – Hebrew Philology*, p. 2
Albright, *Recent Progress In North Canaanite Research*, BASOR. 70, 1938, p. 13.
A Hebrew Letter From The Twelfth Century, BASOR. 73. 1939, p. 10.
The North Canaanite Poems of Al'eyan Ba'al, JPOS, 1934, p. 115.
Harris, *A Grammar of The Phoenician Language*, pp. 6, 9, 68–69.
Autran, *Phéniciens*, p. 4.
Weill, *Phéniciens, Égéens et Hellènes Dans La Méditerranée Primitive*, SY., (II), 1921, p. 126.
Berger, *La Grande Encyclopédie*, Paris, Tome 26, Phénicie, pp. 620 – 621.
Smith Robertson, *The Religion of The Semites*, Meridian Library, 1956, p. 6.
Moscati, *The World of The Phoenicians*, pp. 91 –93.
Eisfeldt, *The Beginnings of Phoenician Epigraphy etc.* PEQ. 1947, p. 69 (notes).
Renan, *L'histoire Du Peuple D'israel*, tome I. pp. 11, 101, 102.
Barnette, *Phoenician – Punic Art*, EWA, p. 295.
Perrot – Chipiez, *History of Art In Phoenicia And Its Dependencies*, 1885, pp. 12, 13 – 14, 63.
Virolleaud, *Les Inscriptions Cuneiformes de Ras Shamra*, SY., 1929, p. 304.
Le Déchiffrement Des Tablettes Alphabetiques De Ras Shamra, SY., (XII), 1931, p. 20.
Gesenius, *Hebrew Grammar*, p. 10, § 2f; p. 6, § 1k ; p. 25, § 5a.
Conder, *Phoenician Inscription From Joppa* PEF. 1892, p. 171.
The Hebrew– Phoenician Inscription From Tel el Hesi, PEF, 1892, p. 126.
Gordon, *Before The Bible*, p. 249 (Hebrew ed. 1966).
Yeivin, *On Problems of Alphabet Origin etc.* Leshonenu, 17, 2– 3 p. 67. (Hebrew)
Vance D. R.; *Literary Sources for The History of Palestine and Syria: The Phoenician Inscriptions*, B. A. 57: 1(1994). pp. 4, 5.
- 2 For example: Harris, *ibid.* p. 22
- 3 Perrot – Chipiez, *ibid.* p. 63.

and elsewhere; "...since the Phoenician inscriptions have been deciphered it has been recognized that the Phoenician and Hebrew languages resembled each other very narrowly – so narrowly that they might almost be called two dialects of one tongue".⁴ He adds furthermore "On the other hand if you refuse to admit that the Phoenicians were of the same blood as the Jews how do you account for their speaking and writing not one of the idioms which we encounter at their best in Africa, but a language that differs little from pure Hebrew".⁵ Renan remarks⁶: "They (the Phoenicians – N. G.) spoke a completely analogous language to what we call Hebrew". In his book "Otzar Haketovot Hafinikiot" Slouschz claims that "Between it (Phoenician – N. G.) and the Biblical Hebrew there are merely dialectical differences".⁷ and on page 28 he remarks, " Everyone who reads Phoenician inscriptions remarks – not unsurprisingly – that the similarity between Phoenician and Hebrew is so great that it is even difficult to decide and say we have two dialects of the same language". He is more definite elsewhere⁸: "In my opinion – and let people say whatever they wish about the Phoenician language – There is no distinct difference between classical Hebrew and Phoenician, and the prophets rightly regarded the expression 'language of Canaan' as synonymous with Hebrew, the only differences to be found in Phoenician texts are located in the spelling and pronunciation, which are more primitive in Phoenicia and which tradition did not change and formulate according to our biblical Hebrew." In this context he remarks⁹: "The further we go back into the past of the Israelite nation the more do documents and spelling of the Israelite Texts show their fundamental affinities with those of the Phoenicians". Gesenius¹⁰ remarks: "Phoenician is nearly identical with ancient Hebrew writing". Cassuto writes: "The language of the Canaanites and that of the Israelites was in fact one language"¹¹. According to Tur–Sinai: "In the days of the Judges and first kings of Israel, the Canaanite– Hebrew language was principally one language"¹² Whereas Schaeffer remarks about the Ugaritic language as the "... language of the Canaanites that is to say archaic Hebrew or proto Phoenician".¹³ Referring to the Siloam inscription (Jerusalem area) of king Hezekiah's time. Sayce¹⁴ who bases, himself on the orthography of

4 ibid. p. 12

5 ibid. p. 13.

6 Renan, Ibid. p. 11

7 Slouschz, Otzar Haketovot Hafinikiot, Mosad Bialik, 1942, preface p. 26 (Hebrew).

8 Slouschz, La Civilisation Hebraique et Phénicienne A' Carthage, p. 16.

9 Ibid. Note 1. p. 16.

10 Gesenius, Hebrew Grammar, §a, p. 25.

11 Cassuto, The Goddess Anat, p. 20 (Hebrew).

12 Tur Sinai. Halashon Vehasefer, 1959, Vol. I, p. 32. (Hebrew)

13 Schaeffer, The Cuneiform Texts of Ras Shamra, p. 57

14 Sayce, The Inscription At The Pool of Siloam, PEF. 1881, p. 72.

this inscription claims that it is principally a Phoenician inscription,

Hence, he believes, the writer of this inscription was a Phoenician. These words of Sayce point to the lack of any definable line separating the two languages. Rin¹⁵ who refers to some of the above-mentioned ideas, remarks that "It is strange that even those who maintain as much...are still not prepared to accept the logical conclusion of their own deductions namely that Hebrew and Canaanite are one and the same". According to Rin "There is no doubt whatsoever that in the days of the Judges and first kings there was no difference between the 'Judean and Ugaritic' pronunciation system and all the arguments, based on phonological differences that 'Ugaritic' is 'a special language' are self refuting".¹⁶

Indeed the "Phoenician" language is identical with the Biblical language, both having the same vocabulary, verbs, and adverbs¹⁷, the same inflections of verbs in plural, past perfect, and imperfect, the same prepositions as well as noun case endings for subject, object and possessive forms. In both the formation of plurals for the feminine and masculine gender is by adding the suffixes-Yim (יִם). T (ת) The names of numerals are identical, sentence structure is similar¹⁸ Many words are identical including words of religious significance.¹⁹ The consonantal pattern and pronunciation is identical, etc. and as Offord puts it²⁰: "It is not merely in their vocabularies that the connection between the Hebrew and Phoenician peoples and languages is demonstrated, but also by the similarities of thought and the manner of expressing in writing their identical sentiments".

15 Rin, *Acts of The Gods (Alilot Haelim)*, p. 9. (Hebrew).

16 *Ibid.* p. 12.

17 Albright, *Specimens of Late Ugaritic Prose*, BASOR, 1958, pp. 36-38.

Conder, *The Syrian Language*, PEF. 1896, pp. 60-77

D'herme, *Le Déchiffrement Des Tablettes De Ras Shamra*, JPOS, XI, 1931, pp. 1 - 6.

Gray, *The Legacy Of Canaan*, VT. 1957, p. 189.

Torrey, *A New Phoenician Grammar*, JAOS, 1937, p. 398.

Harris, *ibid.* pp. 57, 62.

Virolleaud, *Les Déchiffrements Des Tablettes Alphabetiques De Ras Shamra*, SY. XII, 193, pp. 5; 20.

18 Harris, *ibid.* p. 61.

Rawlinson, p. 24.

D'herme, *ibid.* p. 5.

Dahood, *Ugaritic - Hebrew Philology*, pp. 14, 17.

Torrey, *ibid.* p. 398.

Gray, *ibid.* p. 4.

Rin, *Alilot Haelim*, pp. 12-13. (Hebrew).

19 Albright, *The North Canaanite Poems of Al'eyan Ba'al And The Gracious Gods*, JPOS. 1934, p. III.

Held, *ibid.* pp. 272-282

20 Offord, *Archeological Notes*, PEQ. 1917, p. 94.