

c. Literature

Many Aramaic papyri from Elephantine are found in the pre-Christian period.

Targums from the early Christian age feature Aramaic commentaries and text copies.

A number of apocryphal copies are in Aramaic and the Qumran texts have also furnished some Aramaic literature.

d. Finally...

As a language offering help on the development of Hebrew, Aramaic, in my judgment is not a lot of help! At one time it was thought that Aramaisms in the Hebrew text indicated a late date for a writing. But in more recent years Aramaic parts and jottings from Egypt have been found that are as old as our known Hebrew and this seems to indicate that it is a parallel cognate, not a developed specimen. If one is going to be a specialist in Biblical Hebrew or biblical language, one needs to know Aramaic, but if not, then one can probably live without it.

D. The History of our Hebrew Text

1. Ancient Materials

Our Hebrew text is chiefly founded on materials from the Masoretic period...next to be studied in this syllabus. But these materials were themselves derived from more ancient texts. We have very little in this area, limited quantities and qualities, but its importance has increased as more materials have been discovered in recent times. We will note these ancient literary materials fleetingly:

Early Hebrew fragments of a non-masoretic sort are found in Qumran in the most abundant numbers. Other than Qumran (studied later, gang) we might list the following ancient materials: The Nash Papyri, some Palestinian jug handles and inscriptions, the Gezer calendar, the Siloam inscription, and a few ownership seals from the monarchial period in Judaea. In addition to this fragmentary literary cache there are some mss from the Cairo Geniza (destroyed about 700 AD). (That is, the synagogue was then destroyed)