

Write a note on Hebrew language

Hebrew language is a Semitic language of the Afro-Asiatic language family spoken by more than seven million people in Israel and Jewish communities around the world. It is closely related to Phoenician and Moabite, with which it is often placed by scholars in a Canaanite subgroup. Spoken in ancient times in Palestine, Hebrew was supplanted by the western dialect of Aramaic beginning about the 3rd century BC; the language continued to be used as a liturgical and literary language, however. It was revived as a spoken language in the 19th and 20th centuries and is the official language of Israel.

The history of the Hebrew language is usually divided into four major periods: Biblical, or Classical, Hebrew, until about the 3rd century BC, in which most of the Old Testament is written; Mishnaic, or Rabbinic, Hebrew, the language of the Mishna (a collection of Jewish traditions), written about AD 200 (this form of Hebrew was never used among the people as a spoken language); Medieval Hebrew, from about the 6th to the 13th century AD, when many words were borrowed from Greek, Spanish, Arabic, and other languages; and Modern Hebrew, the language of Israel in modern times. Scholars generally agree that the oldest form of Hebrew is that of some of the Old Testament poems, especially the "Song of Deborah" in chapter 5 of Judges. The sources of borrowed words that first appeared during this period include the other Canaanite languages, as well as Akkadian. Hebrew also contains a small number of Sumerian words borrowed from an Akkadian source. Few traces of dialects exist in Biblical Hebrew, but scholars believe this to be the result of Masoretic editing of the text. In addition to the Old Testament, a small number of inscriptions in Hebrew of the biblical period are extant; the earliest of these is a short inscription in Phoenician characters dating from the 9th century BC.