



## **Ancient Near Eastern Languages in Contact – eLecture Series 2021**

We are pleased to announce that, for the second year in a row, University College London and King's College London are co-hosting the eLecture series *Ancient Near Eastern Languages in Contact* (ANELC). The eLectures take place each Wednesday from 4 August until 25 August 2021 from 16:00 until 17:00 BST (London) via Zoom. We are delighted to invite you to this free online event and we look forward to seeing you in one of the meetings.

Co-Organizers: Dr Alinda Damsma — Prof. Lily Kahn — Dr Jonathan Stökl

On the next pages you will find the schedule for the eLectures followed by the abstract of each lecture. To participate in this online lecture series, please click on the relevant Eventbrite link(s) below.

PLEASE NOTE: THE LECTURES WILL NOT BE RECORDED



## Schedule ANELC eLecture series 2021

Wednesdays 4 August – 25 August from 16:00 until 17:00 BST (London)

18:00-19:00 (Jerusalem)

17:00-18:00 (Paris)

11:00-12:00 (New York)

08:00-09:00 (Los Angeles)

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|------------|----------|--|
| eLecture 1 | 04.08.21 | Dr Ohad Cohen (University of Haifa)  |
|            |          | The Canaanite Melting Pot – The Theoretical Implications of ‘Languages in Contact’ to the Understanding of Late Biblical Hebrew              |
|            |          | To book: <a href="https://canaanite-melting-pot-cohen.eventbrite.co.uk">https://canaanite-melting-pot-cohen.eventbrite.co.uk</a>             |
| eLecture 2 | 11.08.21 | Prof. Geoffrey Khan (University of Cambridge)  |
|            |          | Language Contact and the Tiberian Reading Tradition of Biblical Hebrew   |
|            |          | To book: <a href="https://tiberian-reading-tradition-khan.eventbrite.co.uk">https://tiberian-reading-tradition-khan.eventbrite.co.uk</a>     |
| eLecture 3 | 18.08.21 | Dr Letizia Cerqueglini (Tel Aviv University)   |
|            |          | Egyptian beyond Egypt — Ancient Egyptian and Hebrew in Contact: Linguistic and Cognitive Evidence  |
|            |          | To book: <a href="https://egyptian-beyond-egypt-cerqueglini.eventbrite.co.uk">https://egyptian-beyond-egypt-cerqueglini.eventbrite.co.uk</a> |
| eLecture 4 | 25.08.21 | Dr Margaretha Folmer (Leiden University / Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam)  |
|            |          | Some Characteristics of the Aramaic of the Akhvamazda Letters from Ancient Bactria (4th Century BCE)   |
|            |          | To book: <a href="https://aramaic-of-akhvamazda-folmer.eventbrite.co.uk">https://aramaic-of-akhvamazda-folmer.eventbrite.co.uk</a>           |





## Abstracts

**04/08 Dr Ohad Cohen (University of Haifa)**

### **The Canaanite Melting pot – The Theoretical Implications of ‘Languages in Contact’ to the Understanding of Late Biblical Hebrew**

Both the positivist and the relativist approaches to the study of Late Biblical Hebrew (LBH) posit the textual and the linguistic argumentation as the point of departure for the analysis, asking how (in the positivist case) and if (in the relativist case) we can characterize the historical background underlying these phenomena. In my talk I would like to propose that this question should be approached from a different direction. Namely, the analysis of the historical background should be the starting point. Until about three decades ago, the historical evidence from the southern administrative unit in the land of Israel, ‘Idumea’, was relatively limited. The discovery of about 2,000 ostraca from this administrative unit in the late twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century has significantly altered our historical understanding of daily life in this area during the Persian period (538 - 332 BC). These ostraca allow us to glimpse the complex linguistic strata in this geographical expanse and historical period. The texts contain a variety of proper names of the people who lived in Idumea during the Persian period, pointing to a multinational and multilingual situation that stands in a sharp contrast to the administrative language of the ostraca themselves (written in official Aramaic). The lecture focuses on the linguistic inquiry into the different languages that are threaded together by these proper names as evidence of the melting pot of spoken tongues in this area. I will conclude my talk by contemplating on the theoretical implications of the historical and linguistic situation of ‘languages in contact’ in general and the ‘Canaanite melting pot’ in particular to the understanding of LBH.

**11/08 Prof. Geoffrey Khan (University of Cambridge)**

### **Language contact and the Tiberian reading tradition of Biblical Hebrew**

In this talk I shall discuss the historical background of the Tiberian reading tradition of Biblical Hebrew. I shall argue that it has roots in the Second Temple Period. The main focus of the talk will be on those elements of the reading tradition that appear to have arisen by language contact. Language contact was often exploited to make innovations in the reading tradition that created greater clarity in meaning and pronunciation. Language contact was resisted in cases where it could result in reduced clarity. Comparisons are made with other reading traditions of Biblical Hebrew, in particular the Babylonian and Samaritan traditions.

**18/08 Dr. Letizia Cerqueglini (Tel Aviv University)**

### **Egyptian Beyond Egypt — Ancient Egyptian and Hebrew in Contact: Linguistic and Cognitive Evidence**

Would you ever imagine that when today’s Hebrew speakers say *kapara* to their loved ones, wish them a happy *Hanuka*, or praise their mom’s *haroset*, they are actually pronouncing ancient Egyptian words? Previous scholarship has detected nouns (units of measure, raw materials, natural elements, technical tools, ritual instruments and procedures, among others; Yahuda, 1947; Steiner, 2011; Noonan, 2016: 53-67) and personal names of central Biblical characters (especially related to Moses’ family and the Levites;



Muchiki, 1999; Hess, 2016; Hoffmeier, 2016) of Egyptian origin in Hebrew. I will add new evidence of both Egyptian loanwords in Hebrew and Hebrew loanwords in Egyptian, placing them into their sociocultural and historical contexts with the help of archaeological findings (Arie, 2016; Davis, 2016). In fact, to rule out the possibility of Afroasiatic etymological cognates (Satzinger, 2002; Takács, 1999) and support the borrowing hypothesis, I resort in some cases to semantic, cognitive, and cultural evidence, such as same metaphorical and/or synesthetic values of given terms in both source and target language. Moreover, actual borrowing from Egyptian (e.g., Egy. *dp.t* ‘wooden foil’; *rḥ* ‘fresh/shining’; *bšr* ‘to shine/burn’) is supported in several cases by the presence of the same words only in Hebrew and in Levantine Arabic vernaculars, i.e., only in areas of direct Egyptian influence, and not in other Semitic languages. Whether the contact took place or not as written in the tales of the Patriarchs (see Finkelstein and Silberman, 2001), the presence of foreign lexical items in Old Egyptian texts attests to the integration of different ethnic groups in the high ranks of society beginning already in the Old Kingdom, i.e., prior to the military conquest of the Levant (for Arabian and Levantine Arabic lexicons in Old Egyptian, see Borg 2021).

**25/08 Dr Margaretha Folmer (Leiden University / Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam)**

**Some characteristics of the Aramaic of the Akhvamazda letters from ancient Bactria (4th century BCE)**

In this lecture I will address several linguistic, in particular syntactic features that are attested in the so-called Akhvamazda letters from the end of the Achaemenid period (the mid-fourth century BCE), published by Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked in 2012. Even though nowhere explicitly stated within the letters, Akhvamazda may have been the satrap of Bactria and Sogdiana. Despite all the difficulties connected with these letters, they shed an interesting new light on the Aramaic that was written in the chancelleries of the Achaemenid administration, and as such the correspondence lends itself for comparison with another satrapal correspondence, the well-known Arshama correspondence that was written approximately half a century earlier. Several features are suspect of an influence from a non-Semitic language, possibly Old Persian.