

Egyptian Language and Writing

EGYPT IN THE BIBLE • DAVE VASQUEZ • 2023

Language and Writing

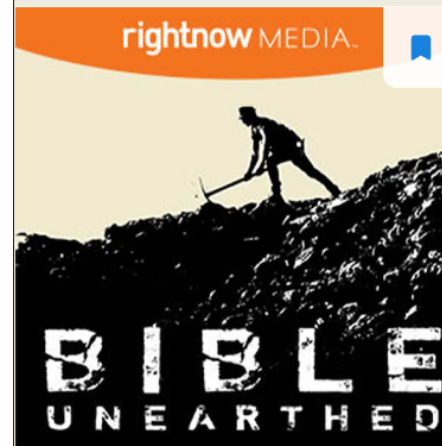
- A **language** usually refers to the spoken language, a method of communication.
- A **script** refers to a collection of characters used to write one or more languages.
- For example, English, German and French all use the same (alphabetic) Latin script.
- A **logographic** writing system is the oldest type of writing system, using symbols that represent a complete word or *morpheme*. (A morpheme is the smallest meaningful unit in a language.)
- Chinese is an example of a logographic script, but most languages also include logograms, such as the ampersand.

EGYPT IN THE BIBLE • DAVE VASQUEZ • 2023

Language & Writing

- A **syllabic** writing system uses a set of written symbols that represent the syllables of the words of a language.
- Ancient cuneiform is a syllabic system.
- Japanese, and Cherokee are examples of modern syllabic systems.
- An **alphabetic** writing system uses a standardized set of symbols or *graphemes* (writing units) that represent the *phonemes* (sound units) of certain spoken languages.
- English is an example of an alphabetic language.

EGYPT IN THE BIBLE • DAVE VASQUEZ • 2023



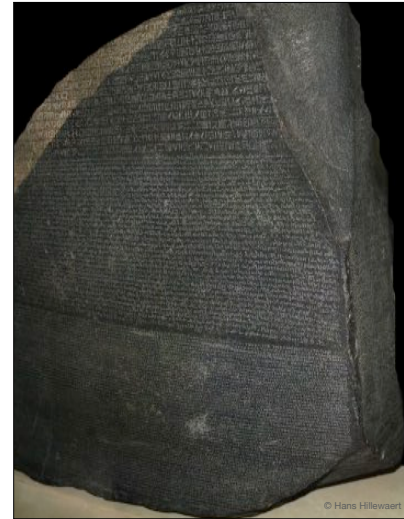
Language and Writing

Titus Kennedy, *Bible Unearthed* #5
RightNow Media, 10:00-12:50 (2:50)

<https://app.rightnowmedia.org/en/player/video/418269?session=418495>

Disciphering Hieroglyphics

The Rosetta Stone



EGYPT IN THE BIBLE • DAVE VASQUEZ • 2023

Rosetta Stone

- In 1798, when Napoleon's invaded Egypt, a group of 167 technical experts, known as the *Commission des Sciences et des Arts*, accompanied the French expeditionary army.
- On 15 July 1799, while French soldiers were strengthening the defenses of Fort Julien, Lieutenant Pierre-François Bouchard spotted a slab with inscriptions on one side that the soldiers had uncovered.
- He and his commander realized its importance and informed General Jacques-François Menou, who was at Rosetta.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosetta_Stone



EGYPT IN THE BIBLE • DAVE VASQUEZ • 2023

Rosetta Stone

- The find was reported to the *Institut d'Égypte* in Cairo, noting that it contained three inscriptions, the first in hieroglyphs and the third in Greek, and rightly suggesting that the three inscriptions were versions of the same text.
- When the British defeated the French, many of their Egyptian artifacts were moved to England.
- By 1802, the Rosetta Stone had been placed in the British Museum, where it has been continuously displayed since that date.
- In fact, the Rosetta Stone is a granodiorite stele inscribed with three versions of a decree issued in Memphis, Egypt in 196 BCE during the Ptolemaic dynasty on behalf of King Ptolemy V Epiphanes.

Rosetta Stone

- The top and middle texts are in Ancient Egyptian using Hieroglyphic and Demotic scripts respectively, while the bottom is in Ancient Greek.
- The decree has only minor differences between the three versions, making the Rosetta Stone key to deciphering the Egyptian scripts.

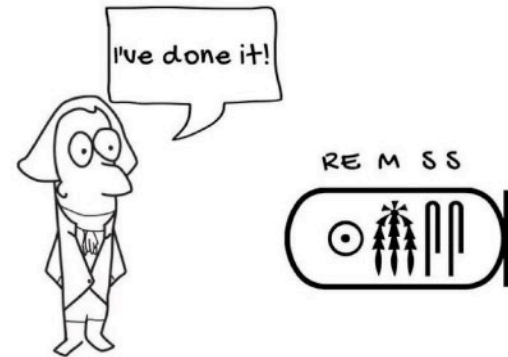


The Rosetta Stone in the British Museum
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yeQ-6ey3M2_o&feature=emb_logo

Rosetta Stone

- Over the years there had been many attempts to interpret Egyptian hieroglyphics without success.
- Based on William John Bankes previous identification of "Ptolemaios" and "Kleopatra," in 1822 Jean-François Champollion, using the stone, was able to identify key phonetic characters and construct a phonetic hieroglyphic alphabet.
- Champollion's Ancient Egyptian grammar and a hieroglyphic dictionary were published after his death in 1832.
- Over some 20 years, using the stone and many other Egyptian inscriptions, scholars worked to understand the language.
- Today, most of the ancient inscriptions on Egyptian monuments are readable in large part because of the Rosetta Stone.

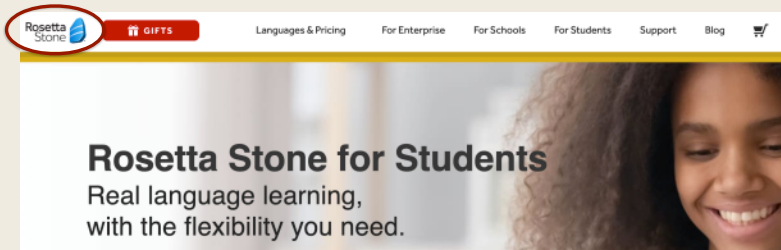
The Dead Speak Online
The words and Lives of the Ancients



Decoding Egyptian Hieroglyphs (4:16 to 10:27)

Rosetta Stone

The significance of this stone is noted in the name of one of the most popular foreign language study tools



Hieroglyphics

Pictures and Sounds

Hieroglyphs



- The word *hieroglyph* comes from the Greek adjective which is a compound of two words meaning "sacred" and "carve" and is a translation of the Egyptian phrase "the god's words."
- A hieroglyph is a character used in a system of pictorial **writing**, particularly the form used on **ancient Egyptian** monuments.

Hieroglyphics

- The system apparently arose in the late predynastic period (just before 2925 BCE).
- During the 3rd dynasty (c. 2650-2575 BCE), many of the principles of hieroglyphic writing were regularized.
- From that time on, until the script was supplanted by an early version of Coptic (about the 3rd and 4th centuries CE), the system remained virtually unchanged.
- Even the number of signs used remained constant at about 700 for more than 2,000 years.

Hieroglyphics

- The total number of distinct Egyptian hieroglyphs increased over time from several hundred in the Middle Kingdom to several thousand during the Ptolemaic Kingdom.
- In 1928/1929 Alan Gardiner published the basic modern standard describing 763 signs in 26 categories. Georg Möller compiled more extensive lists, organized by historical epoch. In Unicode, the block Egyptian Hieroglyphs (2009) includes 1071 signs.

| | | | | | |
|---|----------------|-------------------------|----------------|----------|--|
|  | G25 U+1315C | northern bald ibis | (ib) (bil.) | ib | Bil. ib, for the 'divine', also the ideogram |
|  | G26 U+1315D | sacred ibis on standard | ibis (nb) | id. qhwf | God Thoth, the god of scribes |

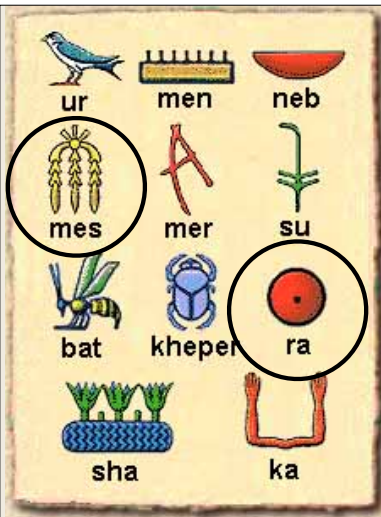
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Egyptian_hieroglyphs#N

Four Uses of Hieroglyphs

- Purely pictorial.** The sign of a man with his hand to his mouth might stand for the word "eat." Similarly, the word "sun" would be represented by a large circle with a smaller circle in its centre.
- Representing or implying another word** suggested by the picture. The sign for "sun" could as easily serve as the sign for "day" or as the name of the sun god Ra. The sign for "eat" could also represent the more conceptual word "silent" by suggesting the covering of the mouth.
- Representative of words** that shared consonants in the same order. Thus the Egyptian words for "man" and "be bright," both spelled with the same consonants, *hg*, could be rendered by the same hieroglyph.
- Hieroglyphs stood for **individual or combinations of consonants.**

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/hieroglyph>

Hieroglyphs as Sounds



- Hieroglyphics used conceptual symbols for entire words and individual sounds.
- We saw how Champollion realized that the sun symbol, while representing the sun and the sun god Ra, could also be used for the sound RA
- He also determined that the symbol for "birth" represented the sound MES.
- From these two symbols, together with one he already knew, was able to decipher the name "Ramesses."
- Interestingly the name means "Ra gave birth to him" which is what the symbols symbolize.

<https://discoveringegypt.com/egyptian-hieroglyphic-writing/egyptian-hieroglyphic-alphabet/>

Hieroglyphics

Sounds Changes Over Time

Language Development

- Over time, languages change and develop. All of us are witnesses to this just by reading the King James Bible which was translated in 1611.
- Similar changes took place in the Egyptian language over time.

Changes in English

From 1300 to present (700 years)

Chaucer

A marchant whilom dwelled at Seint-Denys,
That riche was, for which men helde hym wys.
A wyf he hadde of excellent beautee;
And compaignable and revelous was she,
Which is a thyng that causeth more dispence
Than worth is al the chiere and reverence
That men hem doon at festes and at daunces

Modern

A merchant once dwelled at Seint-Denis,
Who was rich, for which men considered him wise.
He had a wife of excellent beauty;
And she was sociable and fond of revelry,
Which is a thing that causes more expense
Than is worth all the good cheer and reverence
That men do to them at festivities and at dances.

<https://chaucer.fas.harvard.edu/pages/hipmans-tale-0>



Changes in Egyptian Language (8:48 to 9:23)

Hieroglyphics

Reading the Language






























Lintel of Amenemhat III

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LwZB0MsXCjQ>



How to Read Egyptian Hieroglyphics (Hieroglyphs 2:32 to 5:14) (Reading 12:00 to 21:30) (Nick reads 23:13)

Exercise:
Write your name in hieroglyphs

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| A | B | C | D | E | E | E | F | G |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| H | I | J | K | L | M | N | P | Q |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| R | S | T | U | V | W | X | Y | Z |