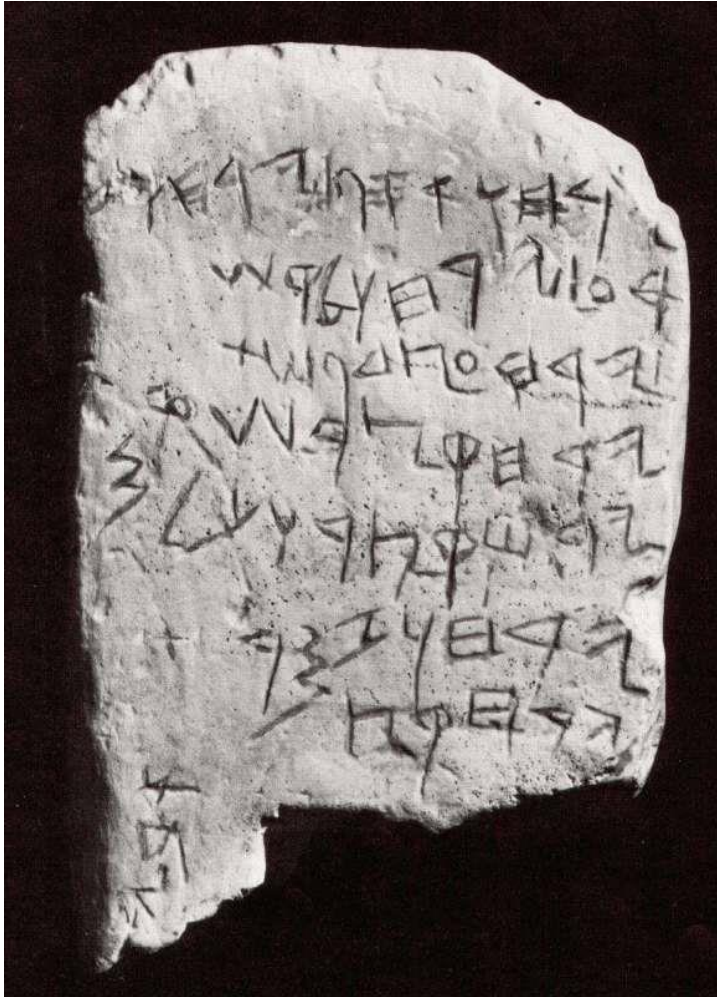


Questions!

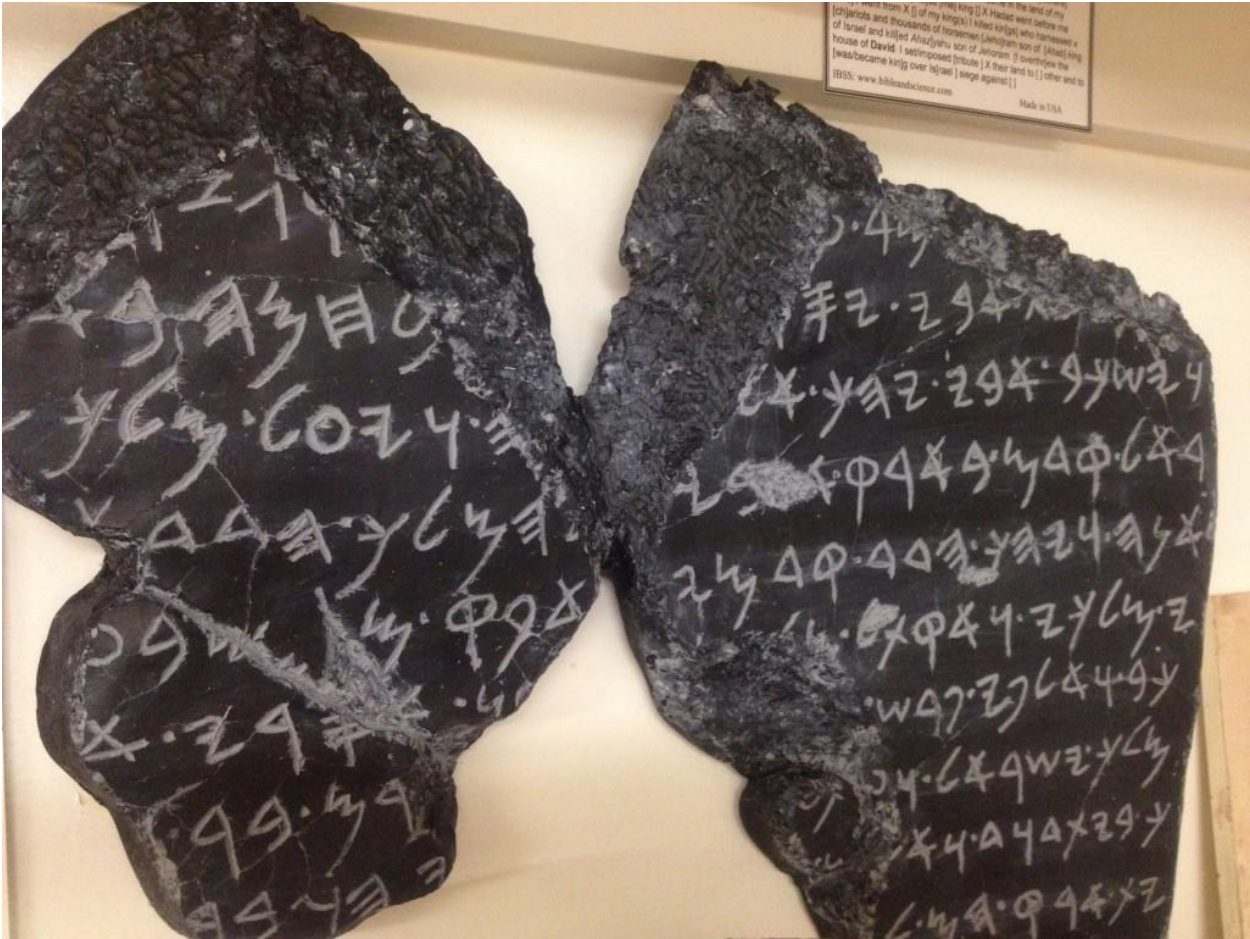
Ancient text had no spaces between letters (right?). what kind of confusion did that create? Did grammar rules or vocabulary develop to avoid confusion?

At first, we don't find word divisions in ancient Hebrew. Here is an inscription called the Gezer Calendar, dated roughly 1200 BCE and thought to be the oldest known example of written Hebrew:



The text is a short poem that appears to describe the months or the agricultural year. Aside from the odd forms of paleo-Hebrew letters, notice that there aren't any spaces or divisions between words.

But now take a look at this inscription from the 9th century BCE (the time of the Monarchy) that was found in 1993 at Tel Dan:



If you look carefully, you'll notice little dots between some of the letters. These are word dividers. The Israelite's Canaanite neighbors to the north who wrote in Ugaritic also used dots as word dividers.

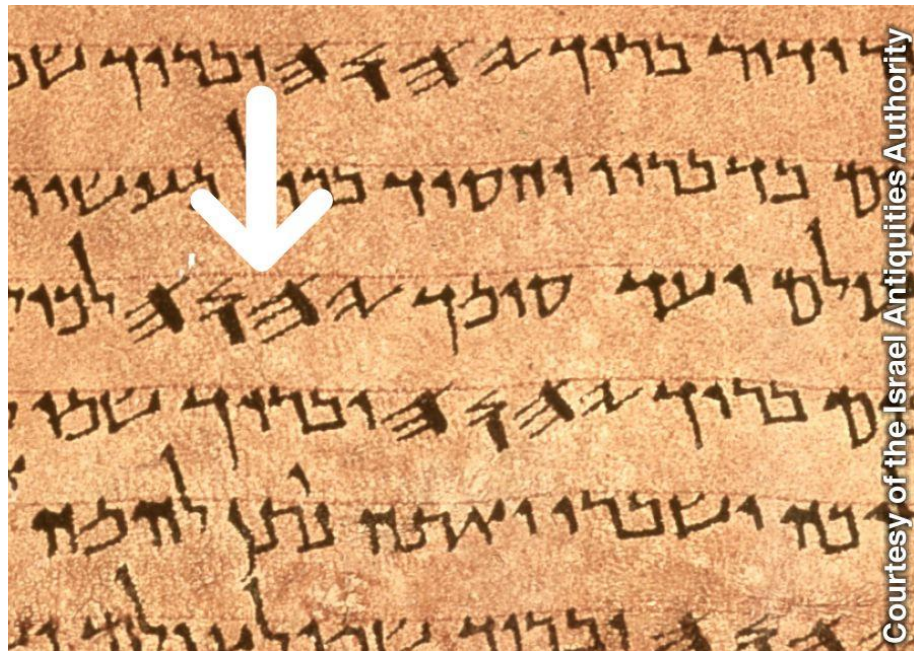
How did the Hebrew letters switch to Aramaic? What did they look like before? Are there examples of texts with (old) Hebrew letters? Or just rock carvings?

What we call "Paleo-Hebrew" is basically the original Phoenician alphabet. The "square" Hebrew letters we're now familiar with developed gradually during the Second Temple period (597 BCE – 70 CE). Here is a chart that compares the different alphabets:

Paleo and Modern Hebrew Aleph-bet

Pictograph	Name	Symbol	Pictograph	Name	Symbol
	Aleph (1) א	A		Lamed (30) ל	L
	Beit (2) ב	B		Mem (40) מ - ם	M
	Gimmel (3) ג	G		Nun (50) נ - ן	N
	Dalet (4) ד	D		Samekh (60) ס	S
	Hey (5) ה	H		Ayin (70) ע	A
	Uau (6) ו	U/Ua		Pey (80) פ - ף	P
	Zayin (7) ז	Z		Tzadhe (90) צ - ץ	Tz
	Chet-Heth (8) ח	Ch		Qoph (100) ק	Q
	Tet (9) ט	T		Reysh (200) ר	R
	Yod (10) י	Y		Shen (300) ש	S/Sh
	Kaph (20) כ - ך	K		Ta (400) ת	T

There are some examples of texts with the older Hebrew characters. The Samaritans had their own version of the Torah—the so-called Samaritan Pentateuch—which retained the older letter forms. But another rather interesting example comes from the Dead Sea Scrolls.



You'll notice that most of the characters look similar to the style we've seen in our reading. But the arrow points to a word written in Paleo-Hebrew, namely the tetragrammaton, the name of God. It's visible in a couple of other places on the photo as well. As a gesture of reverence, it seems that the scribe of this document chose to revert to a more ancient form of the alphabet when he wrote the Holy Name.

How are Hebrew and Aramaic related? who spoke Aramaic? Is one a dialect of the other? Can they be compared like Latin to French, for example?

Hebrew and Aramaic are indeed related, both are classed as “Northwest Semitic” and are very similar to various Canaanite dialects like Moabite or Ugaritic. The comparison of Latin and French is quite appropriate, although Hebrew is probably the older of the two. If you learn Hebrew, learning Aramaic takes very little time, maybe a month or two. There are some consonantal shifts, some different

vocabulary, and a few other things, but the main structure of the verbal system is basically the same as in Hebrew.

It's probably not quite accurate to say that Aramaic derived from Hebrew. Instead, both grew out of the same mixture of languages that originated between the northern Levant in Lebanon and the Tigris river valley. Also, "Aramaic" is highly variable. One dialect, Syriac, is probably the closest we have to the dialect of Aramaic that Jesus would have spoken.