

We have finished V. The Extent of the Canon, and we take up now VI. The Languages of the Old Testament.

There are two languages in the OT. The great bulk of it is in Hebrew. There is a small part in Aramaic. Since much light is thrown on the OT by study in other related languages, I'm going to call

A. The Semetic Languages in General. There is a group of languages we call the Semitic languages. The largest group of languages in the world is what we call the Indo-European languages to which English belongs. This has maybe 40 languages in it.

In the Semitic languages there are five main ones and a few less common ones. We call these a group because they have certain features in common which show they clearly belong together and definitely developed out of one original language. Just as today French, Spanish, Portugese, Rumanian, Italian and two or three other languages have all developed out of Latin and we can trace how they developed from Latin. It would seem that there was one Semetic language, and that out of this these various ones have developed

So while there are a great many differences between them, yet they have a great many points in common. These points give you considerable difficulty when you begin learning Hebrew. Because there are matters to which many of them you are not accustomed. I am not going to go into them at length now, but just to mention some of them I think will be helpful.

So we will mention

#### 1. The Primary importance of the Consonants.

This is a distinctive feature of Semetic languages. All Semitic languages -- the consonants give you the meaning of the word. There are occasionally roots that have vowels in them, but these are comparatively few. You take your word katal we use for our conjugations, and we have katal, kotel, katul, tol -- you change the vowels around a great many different ways, but those specific consonants stay there unless they are changed according to definite phonetic principles related to the form.

So in England the difference between the man eats and he eats oats -- there is no relation between the word oats and the word eats. The vowel is just as important as the consonant in determining the meaning of the words. But in Semitic languages it is the consonants which determine the meaning of the word, and the vowels determine its relation to other words -- its form, as a rule. This isn't a water-tight rule, but let us say it is true in 98% of the cases. Consonants are of primary importance in determining meaning.

#### 2. Triliteralism.

You are all familiar from the Hebrew with the fact that practically all your words have three letters, except a few which many think of as having had three as one time, but a weak consonant has