

# The Devolution and Resurrection of Lashon Hakodesh

This week's shiur is kindly sponsored by the following families.

**Gladys and Matthew Maryles** on the 2<sup>nd</sup> yahrzeit of Gladys's sister, Elaine Baruch, Esther bat Rachel and Avraham Aryeh Leib, ע"ה

**Dr. Yossie and Judy Simpson** on the yahrtzeit (bo bayom) of Yossie's father Harav Shimon Aharon Ben Harav Eliyahu ע"ה

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## The Devolution of Language

### 1. Bereishis 11:1-9

<b>א</b> וַיְהִי כָל-הָאָרֶץ, שְׂפָה אֶחָת, וּדְבָרִים, אֶחָדִים.	<b>1</b> And the whole earth was of one language and of one speech.
<b>ב</b> וַיְהִי, בְּנִסְעָם מִקֶּדֶם; וַיִּמְצְאוּ בְקֶעָה בְּאֶרֶץ שִׁנְעָר, וַיֵּשְׁבוּ שָׁם.	<b>2</b> And it came to pass, as they journeyed east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there.
<b>ג</b> וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ אֶל-רֵעֵהוּ, הָבָה נִלְבְּנָה לְבָנִים, וְנִשְׂרָפָה, לְשֹׂרֶפֶת; וְתָהִי לָהֶם הַלְבְּנָה, לְאַבָּן, וְהַחֲמֵר, הָיָה לָהֶם לַחֲמֵר.	<b>3</b> And they said one to another: 'Come, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly.' And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar.

ד ויאמרו הבה נבנה-לנו עיר, ומגדל וראשו בשמים, ונעשה-לנו, שם: פן-נפוצ, על-פני כל-הארץ.	4 And they said: 'Come, let us build us a city, and a tower, with its top in heaven, and let us make us a name; lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.'
ה וירד יהוה, לראות את-העיר ואת-המגדל, אשר בנו, בני האדם.	5 And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded.
ו ויאמר יהוה, הן עם אחד ושפה אחת לכלם, הנה החלם לעשות; ועתה לא-יבצר מהם, כל אשר יזמו לעשות.	6 And the LORD said: 'Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this is what they begin to do; and now nothing will be withholden from them, which they purpose to do.'
ז הבה, נרדה, ונבלה שם, שפתם--אשר לא ישמעו, איש שפת רעהו.	7 Come, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.'
ח ויפץ יהוה אתם משם, על-פני כל-הארץ; ויחדלו, לבנות העיר.	8 So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth; and they left off to build the city.
ט על-כן קרא שמה, בבל, כי-שם בלל יהוה, שפת כל-הארץ; ומשם הפיצם יהוה, על-פני כל-הארץ. {פ}	9 Therefore was the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth; and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth. {P}

## 2. Rashi 11:7

**לא ישמעו.** זה שואל לִבְנָה וְזֶה מִבִּיא טִיט, וְזֶה עוֹמֵד עָלָיו וּפּוֹצֵעַ אֶת מִחוּ:

## 3. Bereishis 10:5 - It seems like language was already distinct?

ה ה מאלה נפרדו איי הגוים, בארצתם, איש, ללשנו-- למשפחתם, בגויהם.	5 Of these were the isles of the nations divided in their lands, every one after his tongue, after their families, in their nations.
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## The Academic Narrative

### 4. History World <sup>1</sup>

#### Origins of language

The origins of human language will perhaps remain for ever obscure. By contrast the origin of individual languages has been the subject of very precise study over the past two centuries.

There are about 5000 languages spoken in the world today (a third of them in Africa), but scholars group them together into relatively few families - probably less than twenty. Languages are linked to each other by shared words or sounds or grammatical constructions. The theory is

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.historyworld.net/wrldhis/PlainTextHistories.asp?historyid=ab13>

that the members of each linguistic group have descended from one language, a common ancestor. In many cases that original language is judged by the experts to have been spoken in surprisingly recent times - as little as a few thousand years ago.

### **Linguistic groups: from 3000 BC**

The most widespread group of languages today is the Indo-European, spoken by half the world's population. This entire group, ranging from Hindi and Persian to Norwegian and English, is believed to descend from the language of a tribe of nomads roaming the plains of eastern Europe and western Asia (in modern terms centring on the Ukraine) as recently as about 3000 BC.

From about 2000 BC people speaking Indo-European languages begin to spread through Europe, eventually reaching the Atlantic coast and the northern shores of the Mediterranean. They also penetrate far into Asia - occupying the Iranian plateau and much of India.

Another linguistic group, of significance in the early history of west Asia and still of great importance today, is the Semitic family of languages. These also are believed to derive from the language of just one tribal group, possibly nomads in southern Arabia.

By about 3000 BC Semitic languages are spoken over a large tract of desert territory from southern Arabia to the north of Syria. Several Semitic peoples play a prominent part in the early civilization of the region, from the **Babylonians** and **Assyrians** to the **Hebrews** and **Phoenicians**. And one Semitic language, **Aramaic**, becomes for a while the **Lingua franca** of the Middle East.



5. The World's Oldest Writing, Archaeology<sup>2</sup>  
**The earliest known recipes**, by many centuries, are found on three tablets dating to the Old Babylonian period. Though seemingly simple, their minimal instructions could only have been followed by experienced chefs working for the highest echelons of society. This particular tablet features 25 recipes for stews and soups, both meat and vegetarian, including some directions—though no measurements or cooking times—for an amursanu-pigeon stew:

*Split the pigeon in half—add other meat. Prepare the water, add fat and salt to taste; Breadcrumbs, onion, samidu, leeks, and garlic (first soak the*

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.archaeology.org/issues/213-features/4326-cuneiform-the-world-s-oldest-writing>

*herbs in milk). When it is cooked, it is ready to serve.*

(Courtesy Yale Babylonian Collection)

**CLAY TABLET. FOUND:** Possibly Larsa, Iraq. **CULTURE:** Old Babylonian. **DATE:** ca. 1800 B.C. **LANGUAGE:** Akkadian.



**Among the thousands** of Mesopotamian tablets containing both official and personal letters, one example stands out as the first recorded customer complaint and evidence of a business relationship gone very sour. Nearly 4,000 years ago, a man named Nanni expressed his extreme displeasure to the merchant Ea-nasir about a recent copper shipment:

*When you came, you said to me as follows: "I will give Gimil-Sin (when he comes) fine quality copper ingots." You left then but you did not do what you promised me. You put ingots that were not good before my messenger (Sit-Sin) and said: "If you want to take them, take them; if you do not want to take them, go away!" What do you take me for, that you treat somebody like me with such contempt.... Take cognizance that (from now on) I will not accept here any copper from you that is not of fine quality. I shall (from now on) select and take the ingots individually in my own yard, and I shall exercise against you my right of rejection because you have treated me with contempt.*

(© The Trustees of the British Museum)

**CLAY TABLET. FOUND:** Ur, Iraq. **CULTURE:** Old Babylonian. **DATE:** 1750 B.C. **LANGUAGE:** Akkadian.

## 6. Malbim, Bereishis 11:7

הנה כבר נתחברו ספרים אין מספר בחקירה זאת אם הלשונות נוטעו בבני אדם בטבע, ואם הם ע"י הסכמה שכל עם תקנו לשון לעצמם, והחוקרים נבוכו בזה אלה מזה ואלה מזה, ומשה בא בשנת ג' אלפים תמ"ח והודיע לנו כי בשנת ב' אלפים תרנ"ו נמחו כל בני אדם במבול ונשאר נח וג' בניו כולם מדברים שפת עבר ואחרי מאה שנה בדור פלג נתחדשו בין בני אדם שבעים לשון פתאום ע"י ה' והשגחתו, בזה נשיב תשובה נצחת לכל בלתי מאמין לדברי התורה, שאם יבא עתה איש אחד ויאמר שלפני שמונה מאות שנה לא היה בעולם רק אב אחד וג' בניו, ולפני שבע מאות שנה לא היה רק לשון אחד בארץ, הלא יענו כחשו על פניו בשיראו לו מצבות עתיקות מג' אלפים שנה ויותר כתובות בלשונות אחרות, וזה אות שהיו אז אנשים רבים ולשונות שונות, ומצרים כבר היתה ממלכה גדולה בימי משה, וגם היו להם חכמים וסופרים כנודע, ומי יעז לאמר כדברים האלה על זמן קרוב כזה, ולא זאת לבד כי אברהם היה בן נ"ח כשמת נח כמ"ש הראב"ע, וראה את נח ואת שם ועבר, וכן



יעקב ראה את שם ואת עבר ושמעו מעדי ראייה אמתת כל הדברים האלה, ומאתם בא העדות לבניהם, הרי נתאמתו הדברים האלה לבני ישראל וגם לפרעה ולכל מצרים בימים ההם כאשר נתאמת אצלנו שהיה בעולם אלכסנדר מוקדון ושחיה כך וכך

7. Bechor Shor, Bereishis 11:7

ויהי כל הארץ שפה אחת ודברים אחדים. שהיו כולם יודעים ע' לשון:

אשר לא ישמעו איש שפת רעהו. כי כל אחד שכח כל הלשונות חוץ מאחת ומה שידע זה לא ידע זה אבל בין כולם ידעו ע' לשונות דאין נר' לי לומר לפי הפשט דעכשיו נבראו להם הלשונות:

8. Rav Hirsch, Bereishis 11:7

What are the elements to the formation of language? There are, or can be, two: objective formation and subjective formation. Language expresses the essence of things and indicates the nature of their relationships. Language can be formed objectively; that is to say, it expresses the objective essence of things and the nature of their relations to the world. Alternatively, language can be formed subjectively, in accordance with the particular attitudes that a nation currently has about things and their relationships.

As long as there was only one language, the language was objective: it expressed the essence of things and their purpose. Today there are many languages, but few are the words among them that reflect identical attitudes.

Take, for example, the word “judge,” mentioned above. In German a judge is called “*richter*” — i.e., one who gives things proper direction (*richtung*); he decides (*entscheidet*) and separates (*scheidet*). According to the Jewish conception, however, a judge effects משפט; he brings about unity and creates harmonious order (שפד, שפט [placed tightly on a spit], שפח [put, prepare]), and he places every person where he ought to be in his relationship with the other party.

Perhaps, in German one who is simple and unpretending (*schlicht*) is bad (*schlecht*). Accordingly, a German who does not want to be bad must steer clear of simplicity and straightforwardness; cunning and wile are good qualities. According to the Jewish conception, however, יושר is the quality worth striving for.



Or take, for example, the German term “*tugend*” (virtue) and the term “religion.” Today there is not a book or a preacher that does not enjoin religion and virtues. Now, the German word “*tugend*” derives from the verb “*taugen*” (to be useful). The implication is that a person should act virtuously — for utilitarian reasons. In the Romance languages “*tugend*” is identical with “manliness.” Thus, if a German youth is trained in “virtues” (*tugend*), he is actually trained to be a proficient person (*tuechtig*) and to be useful to the community; in the Romance languages he is strengthened in manliness and vigor. In Hebrew, however, there is no one word that encompasses all virtues. For us, the supreme value is *נְצִיחַ*, and the virtues are counted separately: *קִשְׁט*, *הַשְׁמַע*, and so forth.

The same applies to “religion.” Every European language speaks of “religion.” We, the people of religion *par excellence*, have no term for “religion.” If religion is just one aspect of life, it can be assigned a name; its name defines it and delimits it, isolating it from other things. The other aspects of life are not included in religion, which has its own separate realm. If, however, all of life is connected with religion, from birth until after death, then no one can fathom the character of religion or assign it a name, inasmuch as it informs everything, and everything is included in it. “Religion,” if it derives from the verb “*religare*” (to bind), is contrary to the Jewish point of view; for our relation to God grants us freedom: *חַיִּים עַל הַלָּמוּת* (*Eruvin* 54a).

Or take, for example, the concept of existence. Some peoples identify existence with eating: a person does not exist (*ist*) unless he eats (*isst*). According to the Jewish conception, however, thought leads to existence, and existence leads to life (*חַיִּים*, *חַיָּה*). The Jewish people certainly differ from the others in their speech and also in their opinions; what is acceptable to one is not acceptable to the other; what one regards as the essence of life the other regards as life’s defacement.

Or consider an example from social life. In German the term for a people is “*volk*.” This implies that the people’s existence depends on the leader, and all are obligated to obey him (*folgen*). The concept is one of degrading dependence. In the Romance languages the term for a people is “*populus*,” the all-devouring masses. In Hebrew the term for a people is “*עַם*,” a union of equals; *vis-à-vis* the rest of the world, the term is “*גוֹי*,” a closed unit.

In German the term for lord is “*herr*”: he is domineering and mas-

tering (*herrschen*). In Hebrew the term for lord is “*אֲדוֹן*” (*adon*): he is the base which bears and supports everything (*אֲדוֹן כָּל הַבְּרִיּוֹת*) [*Tehillim* 144:14]: our leaders bear our burdens).

We could easily cite more examples, but the point we wish to make is only this: Even if these nations were to speak the same language, nevertheless, with the same words they would mean different things. Even if the language were *אחת שפה אחת*, phonetically and organically the same, the difference in attitudes would result in people not understanding one another. Even if there are no external influences that change the language organically, a divergence of languages can result from changes in the minds that create the language. In short, there can be *דְּבָרִים אֲחֵרִים* and yet not *שפה אחת*.

Until now, mankind had *שפה אחת שפה אחת* and *דְּבָרִים אֲחֵרִים*: Physical and climatic uniformity led to organic conformity of language, and uniformity in opinions and attitudes preserved *דְּבָרִים אֲחֵרִים*, uniform coinage in the expression of ideas. Such a unity of mind can be maintained if the words that are spoken are not coined by the individual, but derived from tradition. If people are in agreement about things in general, and their agreement is sanctioned by a higher source — i.e., if the language is objective, not subjective — then their language reflects not the perspective of the individual, but the unchanging nature of things. Such objective language maintains an agreement of views, and all the wisdom of life is reflected in it. Jurisprudence, ethics, physics, and metaphysics — all these are intended to establish what things are and what they should be, and all this is reflected in such language. The corruption of such a language would cause a major upheaval.

For example, imagine that the word “*haben*” (to have, to hold in one’s possession) were struck from the German language. Indeed, in Hebrew no such word exists. “*Haben*” expresses a corporeal concept: *haften* (cling to), *habere*, *avere* [Latin], to desire something; and when one has seized it, then one “has it.” But if the term “*haben*” were struck from the language, all the concepts of ownership would change. A person would acquire something only if it became his (*לֵב*) by law. Ownership would be conceived of in terms of the object’s connection to the person. The first one who introduced the term “*haben*” brought about a major revolution: he changed the idea of “right” to the idea of “grab.”

Or consider an example from family life, to which our Sages attach such great importance. Adam called Chavah “*אִשָּׁה*” (above, 2:23), and



our Sages comment: מכאן שנברא העולם בלשון הקודש (*Bereshtis Rabbah* 18:4). The terms אִישׁ and אִשָּׁה guarantee the equality of the sexes. As long as they are called אִישׁ and אִשָּׁה, man does not need to be freed from woman, and woman does not need to be freed from man, for neither of them ever made the other into a slave or into a god or goddess. Indeed — as our Sages have already noted (ibid.) — it appears that in no language other than Hebrew are man and woman designated by words of the same root. The equivalence of the names is a sign of equal status. The first person who altered this designation brought about a change in their status: One man harnesses his wife to the plow, while the other throws himself down at her feet.

So, too, as long as father and mother are called אב and אם and are, in the eyes of the child, as their names imply (see *Collected Writings*, vol. VII, p. 72 and p. 300); as long as brother and sister are called אח and אחות and are as though they were threaded and joined together on a single cord — then their names truly represent them; the names themselves convey a wealth of social wisdom and philosophy. By contrast, the terms “*vater*” (father) and “*mutter*” (mother) convey nothing at all.

God taught man to speak in אהרן שפה. Through this language He taught man the nature of things and their purpose. This was the language in which God Himself designated things for man. This language reflected a certain view of things, and it was God's Will that man's wisdom should be based on this view. The foregoing suggests that the phrase קרא בישׁוֹ means: to teach man the nature of things and their purpose, not according to man's own subjective, arbitrary view, but according to God's view and His Will for mankind. For only if we call things by their right names will we be able to glimpse the clear and unclouded truth.

Now we are told that a foreign element penetrated this uniform language and that, as a result, the language was cut off from the source of its vitality. What was this element? It was none other than the self-consciousness of the individual.

The consciousness of the individual was awakened and began to express opposition, pitting subjective caprice against the objective view embodied in the language. The community had sought to make a name for itself and had attempted to nullify the worth of the individual. “The individual may be compared to the number ‘zero,’” reasoned the community. “Only if the community places before him its own digit can

he, too, profit, by virtue of the community.” This attempt to nullify the individual failed when consciousness of the individual's inherent worth awakened. The individual's self-respect moved him to dissent; the feeling awakened in his heart that every man is endowed with freedom of will, slave and master alike. The individual reacted with obstinacy, subjectivity, and egoism; he would no longer accept or submit to any point of view other than his own, not even to a Divine tradition. This was a perverse path, but God was directing it to good purpose, so as to bring redemption to mankind.

The organized community misused its power. A precious treasure is entrusted to the community — namely, the individual; and the task of the community is to call the individual בישׁוֹ. But the community called only עצמו בישׁוֹ and sought to subjugate the individual to its rule.

The individual then rose up and declared: “I do not recognize the community; I recognize only myself.” It is true that, in making this declaration, he rejected the good together with the bad, and cut himself off from the root through which he was to have absorbed all human wisdom from its Divine source. As a result, he would behave with complete subjectivity, without path or purpose. Nevertheless, given such a community, decentralization is the only way to man's redemption.

This subjectivity, which defines things not as the community wishes them to be defined, but as he, the individual, sees them, was the new element אשר כלל ה' which God awakened in the minds of men when He caused their language to disintegrate. The one would say, “Let us preserve the old order, that one acquires something only if it becomes his by law,” while the other would say, “I do not recognize any law and order! Whatever I can seize, whatever I have, is mine.” Such subjectivism was awakened as a result of God's וירדה, and at once the language withered away.

Scripture already said above: וירד ה'. Here it says: נידה — in the form of a wish. Would that there be an awakening of mindfulness, would that the realization penetrate the depths of people's consciousness that there exists a power higher than Nimrod. The implication is that עיקר שכינתו God's Will is that man should not be detached from His rule, and that His Presence should again dwell on earth. The slightest activity toward this end leads to נבילת השפה, the withering of the language.

From then onward, obstinacy, mood, and even passion were the

factors that devised names for things, but not in the uniform manner in which God had defined them. Thus it came about that people no longer understood one another. They called things by different names, in order to spite one another. This is the way of the individual seeking freedom and independence: he sees things and names them however he chooses. Subsequent history, too, reveals that centralization of power divests the language of its diversity.

We see, then, that discord was not precipitated by a proliferation of languages, but on the contrary: discord brought about a divergence of languages. Perhaps at first שפה אחת was preserved, and nevertheless נבלה שם: Even before mankind was scattered and before there were differences in climates, there no longer were דברים אחדים in the שפה אחת. This divergence of opinion then drove people apart, and, finally, climatic differences led to a divergence of languages from an inherent standpoint as well.

## The Reconstitution of Lashon HaKodesh

### The Rise of Modern Hebrew

#### 1. Tzefaniah 3:8-10

ח - לָכֵן חָכוּ לִי נְאֻם ה' לְיוֹם קוֹמִי לַעֲד כִּי מִשְׁפָּטִי לְאַסֹּף גּוֹיִם לְקַבְּצִי מַמְלָכוֹת לְשַׁפֵּךְ עֲלֵיהֶם זַעֲמִי כָל חֲרוֹן אַפִּי כִּי בְאֵשׁ קִנְאָתִי תֹאכַל כָּל הָאָרֶץ:  
ט - כִּי אֲזִ אֶהְפֹּךְ אֶל עַמִּים שָׂפָה בְרוּרָה לְקֹרֵא כָלֶם בְּשֵׁם ה' לְעַבְדוֹ שְׂכָם אֶחָד:  
י - מֵעַבֵּר לְנַהֲרֵי כּוּשׁ עֲתִירִי בֵּת פּוֹצִי וְיִבְלֹן מִנְחָתִי:

8 - Therefore, wait for Me, says the L-rd, for the day that I will rise up to meet [with you]. For it is My judgment to assemble nations, to gather kingdoms, to pour out My fury upon them; yea, all the kindling of My wrath, for with the fire of My jealousy all the earth shall be consumed.

9 - For then I will convert the peoples to a pure language that all of them call in the name of the

L-rd, to worship Him of one accord.

10 - From the other side of the rivers of Cush, My supplicants, the community of My scattered ones-they shall bring Me an offering.



### 9. Ibn Ezra on Tzefaniah 3:8

משפטי - משפט הוא שאעשה כן וטעם קנאתי בעבור שיעבדו אלהים אחרים  
כדרך אל קנא כי זה לעתיד ועל דעת רבי משה על בית שני יתהפכו לעבוד השם  
לבדו בשפה ברורה הוא לשון הקודש שבה לבדה נקרא השם הנכבד:

10. הרב צבי הירש חיות (כתבי מהר"ץ חיות, חלק א', עמוד 74 בהג"ה)

ואולם נודע כי אי אפשר שיושלם קיבוץ עם אחד רק בהיות אישי האומה  
אשר הסכימו להיות לעם אחד שוים בלשונותיהם בנימוסיהם  
בתהלוכותיהם ובמזגיהם ובדרכי המדות כאשר נודע בנסיון... ועתה אם  
רוצים להעשות עם ואומה מאישים נפרדים אשר גרו במדינות שונות ובין  
לאומים רבים, הנה אין אפשרות בטבע להשלים קבוצם להיות לעם אחד,  
כיון שאברי החברה נפרדים זה מזה בתכלית הריחוק, וכמעט בלתי אפשרי  
לפי טבע הדבר לעשות מהם חברה ואומה אחת.  
והנה בהיות ישראל במצרים, היו כל ישראל הנמצאים אז כולם במקום אחד  
ושפה אחת להם ולא נבדלו בנימוסיהם, וכיון שהיה ה' בעזרם והוציאם ביד  
חזקה מתחת סבלות מצרים שוב היה הנקל לעשות מהם אומה אחת, כיון  
שגם בהיותם בארץ מצרים היו אז לעם אחד ושכנו במקום אחד ולא נמצא  
אז איש מישראל שיגור במקום אחר, וכל אישי האומה היה להם התכונה  
הנצרכת לקבוץ עם אחד, לא כן בשעת העליה מבבל שם נשתנה הנס  
באיכותו, כי חוץ מזה שהורשו כולם בדבר המלך כורש לעלות  
לירושלים, הנה היה אז עם ישראל נפזרים בין עמים ולאומים שונים, אלה  
מצפון ואלה ממצרים וארץ יון וספרד וצרפת והודו ופרס, שאר המדינות אשר  
גרו שמה ישראל, והיו נבדלים זה מזה בלשוניהם בנימוסיהם, ולולי ה'  
בעזרם לא היה אפשר בחוק הטבע שתושלם קבוצם להיות לעם אחד... והנס היותר גדול איך  
היה אפשרות בקיומם להשלים האישים והאברים הנפרדים.



It was known that the gathering of one nation cannot be completed until the people of the nation agree to unite as one nation, equal in tongue, manners, general way of life, temperament and virtues, as experience has told us... and now if they desire to become a nation and a people from individuals who lived in separate countries and among many nations, it is naturally impossible for them to form one unified nation since the social limbs are as different from each other as can be, and it is almost impossible by nature to form them into one society and nation.

However when the nation of Israel was in Egypt, they were all in one location and spoke one language and had no differences in manners and way of life, and since G-d helped them and took them out with a Strong Hand from their suffering in Egypt, it was then simple to form them into one nation because also when they were in Egypt they were one unified nation dwelling in one place, and there was no Israelite living elsewhere, and all the individuals had the necessary quality for forming one nation. Not so during the Aliyah from Babylonia, there the miracle was essentially different, because aside from all being allowed, by word of King Cyrus, to ascend to Jerusalem, at that point the nation of Israel were scattered among different nations and countries, some from the north and some from Egypt, as well as Greece, Spain, France, India and Persia – the other countries where the Jews lived, and they differed from each other in spoken language and mannerism, and if G-d had not helped them – their ingathering and uniting would not be naturally possible... and the bigger miracle was how it was possible for them to complete each other and the different 'social limbs'.

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## The Making of Modern Hebrew

11. Washington Post, Reviewed by Yehudah Mirsky

Sunday, November 23, 2008<sup>3</sup>

Eliezer Ben-Yehuda

In *Resurrecting Hebrew*, Ilan Stavans sets out to explain how an ancient, holy tongue was converted into a contemporary, secular language. He values Hebrew's new vibrancy but also describes its development (some would say coarsening) in less than a century into a "messy, boisterous, even chaotic" pastiche. This slang-filled, everyday mixture of Hebrew, Arabic and English seems almost as far removed from the elegance of the first generation of modern Hebrew writers as it does from the stark, rock-hewn language of the Bible.



Stavans, a professor of Latin American culture at Amherst College, is a gifted scholar and man of letters. His book is essentially a travelogue: Spurred by an enigmatic dream, Stavans went to Israel, where he had lived for a year as a young man, to explore his Jewish identity and his emotional relationship to Hebrew. His quest quickly led to the figure at the center of spoken Hebrew's revival, the late Eliezer Ben-Yehuda (1858-1922).

Born in Lithuania as Eliezer Perlman, Ben-Yehuda moved to Palestine in 1881, 15 years before Theodore Herzl published *The Jewish State*, the founding manifesto of Zionism. In Jerusalem, Ben-Yehuda established several newspapers and went about creating -- with his wife, child and their bewildered domestic help -- the first Hebrew-speaking household in millennia.

He adopted a fierce secularism and equally fierce cultural nationalism in which the revival of Hebrew was central. As Stavans writes, "Ben-Yehuda's Zionism was linguistic. You might almost say he wanted Jews to create their own country so that they could speak Hebrew in it." This required new vocabulary, and so Ben-Yehuda embarked on a decades-long project: a massive Hebrew dictionary in which he offered

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/11/20/AR2008112003543.html>

stunningly erudite etymologies both for existing words and for the terms he was inventing.

He was not without foes. Traditionalists recoiled at his unabashed secularization of the holy tongue, while many other figures of the Hebrew revolution, like the colossal poet Hayyim Bialik and the towering essayist Ahad Ha-Am, thought his work soulless and mechanical. Arguably, that group of writers left an even deeper imprint on contemporary Hebrew than did Ben-Yehuda, but the rebirth of spoken Hebrew is nearly inconceivable without this difficult, quixotic man.

12. Yahudus, Torah and Medina, R. A. Gitlin 1964<sup>4</sup>

מאת א. גיטלין - ברוקלין נ. י. (תשכ"ד, 1964 למניינם)

הודפס במהדורה מחודשת - ירושלים

תובב"א תשס"ד (2004 למניינם)

### ה. ארץ הקודש ולשון הקודש

כן גם לשון הקודש היא הלשון בה ברא הקב"ה את עולמו. עשרה מאמרות שבהם נברא העולם - בלשון הקודש נאמרו, ועד היום הזה - כפי המבואר בייחוד בכתבי האר"י ז"ל. בספרי החסידות - מהווה לשון הקודש לא רק חלק מהבריאה, אלא אף את קיומם של כל פרטי הנבראים בעולם: ...וכן כל הנבראים שבעולם השמות שנקראים בהם בלשון הקודש הן הן אותיות הדיבור המשתלשלות ממדרגה למדרגה מעשרה מאמרות שבתורה... ומתלבשות באותו נברא להחיותו (תניא שער היחוד והאמונה סוף פרק א).

כל העולם כולו הוא בריה גשמית, כי כוונת בריאת העולמות, כדברי חז"ל, היא "נתאוהה הקב"ה להיות לו דירה בתחתונים" (מדרש תנחומא), ולכן אף העניינים הרוחניים ביותר מלובשים בלבוש גשמי. גם מצוות התורה, אף שמקורן מהמדרגות העליונות שבעצמות אין סוף ב"ה - מלובשות דווקא בלבוש גשמי ואין אדם יוצא ידי חובתו אלא כשהוא מקיים את המצוות בגשמיות, בלבשו את הציצית העשויה מצמר גשמי, בהניחו את התפילין העשויה מעור בהמה גשמית, בנטלו את הלולב ואת האתרוג שהם דברים גשמיים, ובלעדי המעשה הגשמי לא יצא ידי חובתו אף אם ישג את הסודות הנעלים ביותר הקשורים בתוכן המצוות האלה.

בית

### יהדות התורה והמדינה

בירור רעיוני בשאלת היחס לציונות ולמדינה,  
עם קצת פרקי היסטוריה מן העבר הקרוב

מאת

א. גיטלין - ברוקלין נ. י.

חברות זו לחצי אצל

A. Zimmer, 196 Rutledge St. Brooklyn 11, N. Y.

וכן במערכת "הקול", ירושלים, ת. ז. 700, ישראל.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.yoel-ab.com/katava.asp?id=42>

ברם, רק מצוות ד', היא העושה את האתרוג לאתרוג. אם יטול אדם אתרוג כשר ומהודר בערב סוכות או למחרת הסוכות - אינו אלא אוחז פרי גשמי בידו שאין חשיבותו אלא כתפוח זהב או לימון. רק אם יטלנו בעת ובאופן המצווה בתורה - רק אז הוא מקיים את המצווה ורק אז הוא מתדבק ע"י מצווה זו בעצמות אין סוף ב"ה. הוא הדין ללימוד התורה עצמה. הלומד, למשל, את פרק "השותפין שרצו לעשות מחיצה בחצר" מתוך הגמרא בבא בתרא, או מתוך מפרשי התורה - הריהו לומד תורה ומקיים מצות תלמוד תורה, והריהו באותה שעה בכל אותן הבחינות הנעלות של העוסק בדברי תורה שנתפרשו בדברי חז"ל, בספרי החסידות והקבלה וכו'. אולם העוסק באותה שאלה של השותפין שרצו לעשות מחיצה בחצר מתוך ספר החוקים של ארצות הברית, למשל, או ב"קודקס יוסטיניאנוס" של המשפט הרומי וכיו"ב - אף אם נניח שפסק הדין במשפט



האמריקאי או הרומי יהיה אותו פסק הדין-אין כל מצווה או קדושה בלימודו, ואין בכך יותר מאשר אילו עסק, למשל, בתקנות המכס של ממשלת ארצות הברית.

לשון הקדש גם היא לשון בני אדם, אשר יש בה דקדוק, שמות, משפטים, משקלים וכו' כביתר הלשונות - אבל כל אלה הם לבושה הגשמי בלבד, ואילו תוכנה האמיתי נשמתה, היא גבוהה ונעלה מאד - בה ברא הקב"ה את עולמו ועל ידה מתקיימים כל הנבראים כנ"ל.

13.

Igros RaRiyah II, page 281

## תרעב

ב"ה, עה"ק יפו ת"ו, י' אדר תרע"ד

כבוד הפדרציה הציונית, "מרחי", לשכת-המרכז בהמבורג, שלוי רב.

ממכתבם הנכבד מכ"ז שבט העבר נוכחתי, שלא קבלו עדיין את תשובתי בגילוי דעתי בדבר מצבנו ביחס למלחמת השפה-הא. והנני בזה חוזר על תוכן הדברים אשר כתבתי במכתבי שנשלח כבר.

הנני רואה, שאנו צריכים לעמד על הבסיס האיתן של קבלת כל הטוב שישנו בכל פינה וכל תנועה, וקו"ח בתנועה הלאומית שלנו, שבסיסה לעולם הוא קדוש. מפני שתכנון הוא החיים של גוי קדוש. ותחיית השפה, כמו תחיית הארץ, לא תרד אצלנו מכבודה, אע"פ שרבו, לצערנו, המשתמשים בשתייהן שלא-כהוגן. ודוקא בשביל כך מוכרחים אנו עוד יותר להתאמץ לקחת את החלק היותר רשום בתחיות הללו, ההולכות ומתפתחות, ויודעים אנו ברור, כי דבר-ד' הוא אשר פקד את עמו. ומצמיח להם קרן-ישועה קמעה-קמעה.

בודאי בכל עז נצא למחות מחאות חיוניות, נגד אלה המקצצים את שני הענפים הללו, הארץ והשפה, משורש החיים שלהם, ממקור הנצח, משם ד' אלהי ישראל הנקרא על עמו, בתורת-חיים ואמונת-אומן. אבל דוקא ממקור חיי עד נשאב לנו כח בלתי-פוסק להגדיל את פעלנו על הככרים הרחבים אשר לענפים הנכבדים הללו, כארץ וכשפה, ובכל אומץ הננו מוכנים להגן על כבודם ולהרבות השפעתם, ובטוחים אנו בימין ד' רוממה, שנצליח ונעשה חיל. בכבוד נעלה ובברכת-ד' מציון ומקודש.

הק' אברהם יצחק הכהן קוק

