

**“Letter to Peretz Smolenskin, Editor of Hashahar”,
Eliezer Ben-Yehuda (1880)**

It is plain for all to see, sir, that our youth is abandoning our language – but why? Because in their eyes it is a dead and useless tongue. All our efforts to make them appreciate the importance of the language to us, the Hebrews, will be of no avail. Only a Hebrew with a Hebrew heart will understand this, and such a man will understand even without our urging. Let us therefore make the language really live again! Let us teach our young to speak it, and then they will never betray it!

But we will be able to revive the Hebrew tongue only in a country in which the number of Hebrew inhabitants exceeds the number of gentiles. Therefore, let us increase the number of Jews in our desolate land; let the remnant of our people return to the land of their fathers; *let us revive the nation and its tongue will be revived, too!*

Source: *Resurrecting Hebrew*, Ilan Stavans, Schocken Books, New York, 2008, p. 34.

***“Debate with Assimilationist Jews in Lvov”,
Yedidya Shoham (1917)***

Have you ever felt your heart pound at the sound of our beloved language? You must live far away and not hear those sounds for many years, in order to understand what it means to suddenly hear, among the constant din of foreign languages, words that, when heard, make the past appear before our eyes, and the figures of Moses the legislator and David the poet materialize before us, images of those people who gave the world their most exalted ideals.

To deny young Jews the sublime sense of pride, to take from them the feeling of homey warmth that they feel when they hear the sound of this language – you call this granting them the ability to live. How miserable you are! Have you ever felt what is contained in the Kol Nidre prayer, in the sound of the shofar? Can that be compared to how we feel when we hear the Polish anthem, “Jeszcze Polska nie zginela” [“Poland is not yet lost”]? Are you capable of understanding what the words “Our hope is not lost” [from the Zionist anthem “HaTikva”] mean to us? Do you hear that? Our hope is not yet lost.

Source: Land and Desire in Early Zionism, Boaz Neumann, Brandeis University Press, Massachusetts, 2011, p. 165.

***“Land and Desire in Early Zionism”,
Boaz Neumann (2011)***

The arriving Halutzim [pioneers] encountered Hebrew as a spoken language principally in the new Jewish settlements in the Galilee. They marveled at and exulted in the sound of it. Natan Hofshi and his friends were amazed to hear mothers using Hebrew to comfort their children, and even more awed by the children crying in Hebrew.

Shulamit Hayyut described an encounter with a group of children speaking Hebrew on their way home from school. She knew there were Hebrew-speaking children in the Land, and the scene was a perfectly ordinary one. Yet she ended up walking with them for a long time. “It was hard for me to believe,” she wrote. “Are there really children in the world for whom Hebrew is their mother tongue? And will my own children speak Hebrew some day? Only Hebrew? And they will call me Ima [mother]? It sounds like a fantasy.”

Source: Land and Desire in Early Zionism, Boaz Neumann, Brandeis University Press, Massachusetts, 2011, p. 150.