

Document A: “Resurrecting Hebrew”, Ilan Stavans (2008)

The infrastructure for the revival of Hebrew began centuries before Ben-Yehuda’s effort. Among the earliest modern literary manifestations was *Zahut Bedihuta de Kiddushim*, a late-sixteenth-century play by J. Sommo. There was also the Yiddish-Hebrew dictionary by Elijah Levita, the Renaissance-period grammarian, poet, and author of the *Bove Bukh* (1507-8), the most popular chivalric romance composed in Old Yiddish, *Ha-Me’assef*, a quarterly review, appeared between 1783 and 1797, and between 1808 and 1811. Likewise, the weekly *Ha-Maggid* began to appear in Russia in 1856. And there were Hebrew-language newspapers in Ferrara, Italy, and Dessau, Germany. Finally, Abraham Mapu’s *Ahavat Tziyyon*, the first novel ever to be written in Hebrew, was released in 1853.

Source: *Resurrecting Hebrew*, Ilan Stavans, Schocken Books, New York, 2008, p. 27-28.

Document B: “The Story of Hebrew”, Lewis Glinert (2017)

Jews have done a great deal of thinking about Hebrew – more, perhaps, than most peoples have thought about their language – and for a good reason. For much of their history, Hebrew was not a mother tongue to be spoken naturally. Rather, Jews kept it alive by raising their young men to study and ponder Hebrew texts. This was true for a period of some two thousand years, stretching from the close of the biblical era down to the early twentieth century and the restoration of spoken Hebrew.

But how did Hebrew mean so much to them and how could Jews keep it alive so well that, after two millennia, it could be restored almost overnight? The restoration of Hebrew, first as a mother tongue and then as an all-purpose language of a modern Jewish state, was an act without precedent in linguistic and sociopolitical history. ...

The engine of Jewish existence for those two millennia was the study of the Torah. Judaism’s sacred texts: Bible, Midrash, Talmud and the teachings springing from them. In the words of Psalm 119:97, “how dearly I love Thy Torah; I speak about it all day long.” Jews intensively studied the wording of these texts for every conceivable nuance. The loss of their Temple, their liberty, and then their homeland in the first centuries of the Common Era imperiled but ultimately strengthened knowledge of the Torah and the Hebrew language as a core component of Jewish identity. ...

Almost throughout their history, Jews have taken for granted that they are a people as well as a religion. This national consciousness, rooted in biblical memory, held firm across the centuries of Diaspora and provided a cogent and inspirational rationale for modern Zionism.

Source: The Story of Hebrew, Lewis Glinert, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 2017, p. 2-3.

**Document C: “Tongue of the Prophets”, Robert St. John,
(2008)**

The reply from *Hashahar* was only a postal card, but if it had been on the finest of parchment, engraved in letters of gold, it could hardly have brought more happiness to the tubercular student from Luzhky [Lithuania].

“We are pleased to announce that we are publishing your article in an early issue. We have changed the title from ‘A Burning Problem’ to ‘A Worthy Question.’ You possess a talent for writing. May your pen be blessed!” ...

It was only a few days later that a copy of *Hashahar* arrived with Eliezer’s new name in print for the first time. Sitting again in his favorite café, he spread the paper out on the table and with trembling hands displayed it to Tshashnikov.

Eliezer had read and reread the article to his friend in manuscript, but now he went through it again ...

“If, in truth, each and every nation is entitled to defend its nationality and protect itself from extinction, then logically we, the Hebrews, also must needs have that same right. Why should our lot be meaner than that of all others?

“Why should we choke the hope to return and become a nation in our deserted country which is still mourning its lost children, driven away to remote lands two thousand years ago? Why should we not follow the example of all nations, big and small, and do something to protect our nationality against extermination? ...

“Why should we not lift ourselves up and look into the future? Why do we sit cross-handed and do nothing which would serve as a basis upon which to build the salvation of our people? If we care at all that the name of Israel should not disappear from this earth, we must create a center for the whole of our people, like a heart from which blood would run into the arteries of the whole, and animate the whole. Only the settlement of Eretz Israel can serve this purpose.

“Today, as in ancient times, this is a blessed land in which we shall eat our bread not meanly; a fertile land upon which nature has

bestowed glory and beauty; a land in which only hard-working hands are needed to make it the happiest all countries. All tourists to that place state such facts unanimously.

“And now the time has come for us, the Hebrews, to do something positive. Let us create a society for the purchase of land in Eretz Israel; for the acquisition of everything necessary for agriculture; for the division of the land among Jews already present and those desiring to emigrate there, and for the provision of the funds necessary for those who cannot establish themselves independently.”

Source: Tongue of the Prophets, Robert St. John, Melvin Powers Wilshire Book Company, Hollywood, 1952, p. 44-46.

Document D: “Letter to Peretz Smolenskin”, 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. ... 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.

**Document E: “Letter to Deborah”, Eliezer Ben-Yehuda
(1880)**

Dear Deborah:

I must inform you that I have seen Dr. Netter and his diagnosis is not good. He says I have tuberculosis, that my lungs are badly affected, and has ordered me to stop my studies immediately. He has recommended a climate such as Algiers.

The news has very much frightened me because I have the feeling that I have not much longer to live. If I should find the means to go to North Africa it is likely that I would never be able to return to Paris to continue my studies. What is distressing is that I am on the threshold of success in my plan. It has taken me two years in Paris to prepare the ground. Now, just as I am ready to make the appeal to our people, the ground is to be cut from under me. I have worked hard, gaining the knowledge which I needed, but what good will it be if I die before I can put it to use?

I have the feeling of a person condemned to death and I so much wish to find a way to utter my last words. For this reason I work now without sleep to put onto paper the reasons why it is so important for the Jewish world to become inflamed with the idea of returning to the land of our forefathers and working for the freedom to which we are entitled.

I have decided that in order to have our own land and political life it is also necessary that we have a language to hold us together. That language is Hebrew, but not the Hebrew of the rabbis and scholars. We must have a Hebrew language in which we can conduct the business of life. It will not be easy to revive a language dead for so long a time.

The day is so short; the work to be done so great.

I wonder often, since receiving the report of the doctor, who is going to be the trustee of this great mission. My friend Tshashnikov has the enthusiasm and interest, but is not a Jew, which would make it impossible for him to carry on my plan.

For all these reasons I am working like a man with but a few hours to live. I cover hundreds of pieces of paper with arguments, reasons, and proofs. If I

can write something which is convincing and get it into a publication where it will command attention, then possibly someone will be found to put the plan into action.

I beg you and your family to give me the benefit of your good wishes for my success at this critical time.

Eliezer.

Source: Tongue of the Prophets, Robert St. John, Melvin Powers Wilshire Book Company, Hollywood, 1952, p. 39-40.

Document F: “*The Story of Hebrew*”, Lewis Glinert (2017)

Will our language and literature last much longer if we do not revive it, if we do not make it a spoken language? And how can that work other than by making Hebrew the instructional medium of our schools? Not in Europe, nor in any of the lands of our exile, where we are an insignificant minority and no amount of teaching effort is going to succeed, but in our own land, the land of Israel.

With these words, printed in 1880 in the newspaper *Ha-Magid*, a revival of *spoken* Hebrew was first publicly mooted. The author was an unknown, twenty-two-year-old, fiercely secular Russian Jew using the pseudonym Eliezer Ben-Yehuda.

In 1881 Ben-Yehuda sailed for Palestine, one of the first Zionists. The pious Jewish communities deeply rooted there, Sephardim with an admixture of Ashkenazim, had a spiritual bond to the land and dreamed of a messianic ingathering and restoration of past glories, Hebrew included. Ben-Yehuda’s vision of a reborn nation and a reborn Hebrew was, on the face of it, secular and foreign in inspiration. One night, shortly after graduating from high school – as he lyrically recounts in his memoirs – he was reading the news about the Russian-backed Bulgarian uprising against Ottoman rule, and feeling proud to be a (Jewish) Russian, when

the heavens opened and I saw a brilliant flash of light. My thoughts flew from the Shipka pass in the Balkans to the banks of the Jordan river, and I heard a mighty voice within me calling: “The rebirth of the Jews and their language on ancestral soil!”

Ben-Yehuda’s logic was inexorable: If modern-minded Jews resettled the Holy Land and spoke Hebrew, Hebrew literature might be saved, and in turn the Jewish people might be saved. Neither could survive a Gentile environment in a modern world.

The idea of using Hebrew for spoken conversation was not in itself far-fetched. Ben-Yehuda had once managed a halting Hebrew exchange, about politics, with a Sephardi friend. Sent to Algiers to convalesce from tuberculosis, he had also indulged his exotic yearnings by conversing with Sephardi sages who, he claimed, spoke a fluent Oriental Hebrew. But to turn Hebrew into the everyday idiom of an entire nation was pure fantasy.

Theodor Herzl's first Zionist Congress was fifteen years in the future. The Jewish populace that Ben-Yehuda and his fellows found in the Holy Land was largely impoverished and overwhelmingly traditional. The idealistic settlers knew nothing of farming and managed to survive only through the help of European Jewish philanthropists, who had no interest in establishing Hebrew-language schools.

Ben-Yehuda, however, was uncompromising and undeterred. Once he had reached his conclusion, he followed through, whatever the obstacles or risks – to himself or others.

Source: The Story of Hebrew, Lewis Glinert, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 2017, p. 186-189.

**Document G: “A History of Israel”, Howard M. Sachar,
(1976)**

During the prewar years, a crucial linguistic framework was similarly being established for the Zionist redemptive effort. It was altogether as impressive an achievement as the Conquest of Labor, for Hebrew educational facilities were virtually nonexistent in Palestine until the twentieth century. Indeed, until the late 1870s, the handful of Jewish schools operating in Palestine were almost entirely religious, and conducted in the Yiddish language on antiquated Orthodox lines. The Lamel School, founded in Jerusalem in 1856, taught its courses in German and Yiddish. In the network of elementary and vocational schools sponsored by the Alliance Israelite Universelle, French remained the principal language of instruction for the – essentially – Sephardic youngsters. It developed, then, that the emergence of modern Hebrew, a language capable of secular, vernacular use, awaited the heroic achievements of a sparrow-chested little Russian Jewish philologist, Eliezer Perlman – better known by his adopted surname of Ben-Yehuda.

Born of Orthodox parents, the recipient of a parochial religious education, Ben-Yehuda joined other thousands of his generation in turning from pietism to Haskalah secularism, and then to Zionism. Although he was an enthusiastic student of Hebrew literature, his vision of language as the decisive component of modern nationhood awaited his years as a student at the Sorbonne, when he became acutely conscious of the role of literature in the growth of French nationalism. “I have decided,” he wrote his fiancée in 1880, “That in order to have our own land and political life it is also necessary that we have a language to hold us together. That language is Hebrew, but not the Hebrew of the rabbis and scholars. We must have a Hebrew language in which we can conduct the business of life.” The following year, Ben-Yehuda, aged twenty-three, married his fiancée, aged twenty-seven, and they departed for Palestine. From the moment they boarded ship, they vowed thenceforth to speak no other language but Hebrew. We are told that the pledge was never broken.

The couple’s next years in Palestine were as agonizing in their poverty as any endured by the early farmers of Zionist settlement. In Jerusalem, Ben-Yehuda earned a wretched pittance teaching Hebrew for an Alliance school. His every free moment was devoted to editing a succession of Hebrew-language newspapers, the circulation of which in the early 1880s

rarely exceeded two hundred. There were occasions when he and his growing family were evicted from their room for lack of rent money. At times they nearly starved. Nor did Ben-Yehuda ease his circumstances by his incessant attacks on the Orthodox: for their opposition to the use of Hebrew and to secular labor, and for their “social crime” of fostering a Chalukkah community. The outraged pietists retaliated, stoning his office, denouncing him to the Ottoman authorities for “treason” (once he was briefly jailed), placing him under a rabbinical ban of excommunication. When Ben-Yehuda’s wife died of tuberculosis in 1891, leaving behind five children, the Orthodox refused her burial in the Ashkenazic cemetery.

Vocabulary

Challukah: also *halukka*, organized collection and distribution of charity funds from Diaspora Jews for Jewish residents of the Holy Land.

Vernacular: using plain, everyday, ordinary language.

Source: A History of Israel, From the Rise of Zionism to Our Time, Howard M. Sachar, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 2007 (First Published 1976), p. 82-83.

Document H: “*The Story of Hebrew*”, Lewis Glinert (2017)

Two women had an equal share in his venture and its risks: Dvora and Beila Jonas, two thoroughly modern young sisters each of whom became in turn Mrs. Ben Yehuda (Beila, also known as Hemda, after the death of Dvora). Arriving in the land of Israel, Eliezer and Dvora vowed only to speak Hebrew in their home – an agreement that initially bound her to silence since she knew none. They then agreed to raise their first child, Bentzion, born in 1882, solely in Hebrew, and somehow found a wet nurse willing to speak Hebrew to the baby. Dire warnings by fellow Zionists that the child might grow up retarded seemed confirmed when he turned three without yet uttering a word – until one day (as told to this author in 1990 by his last surviving daughter, Dola) Ben Yehuda caught his wife singing a Russian lullaby and flew into a rage when suddenly the frightened child blurted out *Abba, Abba!* (Daddy, Daddy!).

Were these the first native Hebrew words in two thousand years? Perhaps. But regardless of its veracity, the story reflects the very real anxieties that surrounded this unprecedented linguistic venture. What clearly distressed the Ben-Yehuda children much more, in any case, was being barred from other children’s parties lest they come back speaking Yiddish. Bentzion nonetheless grew up speaking Hebrew as his native tongue. And “the first Hebrew child,” as he was known, became, literally, a poster child for Zionism and the Hebrew revival.

Source: *The Story of Hebrew*, Lewis Glinert, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 2017, p. 189.

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

Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, a prime mover and an embodiment of the Hebrew revival, who created what might be called a “total Hebrew-language environment” around his eldest son, Itamar, born in 1882. (Itamar’s original name was Ben-Zion. He changed it after the death of his mother, Devorah, who had told him that they originally wanted to name him “Itamar” but were deterred by a very traditional, conservative society that took exception to this untraditional name.) Ben-Yehuda made his wife vow never to speak to their son in any language other than Hebrew.

A week after Itamar’s circumcision ceremony, Ben-Yehuda dismissed the woman who had been the midwife and the baby’s first caretaker, because she spoke to the child in Yiddish. Despite the hardship this imposed on Devorah, the parents agreed not to employ another nanny so that the child would not be exposed to languages other than Hebrew. “We feared the walls of our house,” Ben-Yehuda wrote, “we feared the air in our room, lest [the boy] hear a foreign language from the maid, and the sound of voices impinge on the boy’s ears, foreign sounds blemish his hearing of Hebrew, and the Hebrew words not be absorbed as they should, to their fullest extent, so the child would not speak Hebrew.”

At times, Ben-Yehuda demanded that Itamar be put to bed before the arrival of guests who did not know or make a practice of speaking Hebrew. He feared his son making friends with other children, lest they teach him Ashkenazi and Sephardi jargon and he forget his Hebrew. When he was small, his mother sang him a Hebrew lullaby that Ben-Yehuda himself wrote. On one occasion she rocked him in her lap and sang him a Russian song. When Ben-Yehuda heard her, he was so angry that he banged on a small table with enough force to shatter it.

Devorah could not take her son to visit neighbors, except for two or three Hebrew speakers. One neighbor, Shayna-Malka, agreed to not say a word so that she could pick up and cuddle the child. Many predicted that the boy would become a simpleton if he was not spoken to in a “human” language and did not grow up in human company. “A boy in the Land without a language, spoken to only with hand-signals (i.e., by the few people he came in contact with who did not speak Hebrew), will certainly be dumb,”

they warned. But Ben-Yehuda persisted. He forbade his son to associate with two children who played in the yard his house shared with several others, even prohibiting him from listening to their voices. Itamar was not sent to a preschool; a special one was set up for him alone at home. Until he was three his linguistic development was slow and he did not say a word. Ben-Yehuda declared that even if the experiment failed, he would attempt it again with his younger children, until he achieved his goal. When Itamar asked to keep a dog he found in the street, his father agreed on condition that the boy speak to the dog only in Hebrew.

When Devorah came down with tuberculosis and could not take care of the children, Ben-Yehuda wrote to his mother in Russia and asked her to come. She was seventy years old, but made the trip and took over the household management and care of Devorah and the children. The mother knew no Hebrew other than a few prayers whose meaning she did not understand. Nevertheless, Ben-Yehuda continued to insist that Hebrew be the family's sole language. He forbade his mother to speak Yiddish. In the end, he agreed that she could speak Russian with the children, since he considered Russian less of a danger than Yiddish.

Ben-Yehuda's original plan was to keep Itamar at home until he was seven. But ultimately he gave in and sent the boy to school when he was five. There, Itamar fell in love with French and occasionally "transgressed" by speaking it. Once his father caught him singing the French national anthem in the schoolyard. All the other children fled because they knew that Itamar was forbidden to speak anything but Hebrew. Ben-Yehuda took his son home, brought him into his study, and whipped him. "One, two, three, four," Itamar later recalled his father counting, "one for each verse of the French anthem he had sung, one stroke per verse." Nevertheless, when Itamar was sick, he still sometimes uttered words in other languages.

Like the pioneers, Ben-Yehuda associated the Hebrew revival with the revival of the Land and its soil. He was well aware of the connection between Hebrew, the language of the forefathers, and the Land of Israel, the Land of the Fathers. As fate would have it, the day of Itamar's birth coincided with the purchase of a plot of land where the first Hebrew *moshava*, Rishon LeTzion, would be established. Ben-Yehuda commented:

Is it not astounding that, among all the events in the world, our revival on the soil, if it is proper to speak that way, and the beginning of our

linguistic revival occurred together, on a single day, almost at the same hour? On the day that the first *moshava* was established on the soil of the fathers by a people who had determined to return to the Land of their Fathers, on that same day a boy was born who was destined to be the first of that nation's children who would again speak in the language of the fathers. ...

[On that day] our national rebirth was founded in its two aspects, the soil and the language, each of which cannot exist without the other.

Source: Land and Desire in Early Zionism, Boaz Neumann, Brandeis University Press, Massachusetts, 2011, p. 151-153.

**Document J: “Tongue of the Prophets”, Robert St. John,
(2008)**

The first issue of the *Deer* came out on the fifth day of the month of Heshvan in 1884. It consisted of a single piece of paper folded to make four pages, five by nine inches, smaller than the ordinary business letterhead....

The reaction of the Jews of Palestine to this first real European-type Hebrew newspaper was at least not apathetic. Everyone admitted there was a great deal of news packed into tis four pages. But they objected to the way this Ben Yehuda wrote. Instead of the pompous style of the scholars, who often copied whole sentences out of the Talmud, this man wrote simply, in conversational style. Many complained that he did not write “the language of the angels and the prophets.”

They were also violently antagonized by what he said. Who was this young upstart who defied all conventions? He was worse than a *goy* (a non-Jew), for he had been brought up in the faith and should know better. What did he mean by arguing for the use of Hebrew? Hebrew was to pray in. God would be greatly displeased by this heretic who claimed that his own son, although almost two years old, had yet to hear a single word of any other language.

Source: Tongue of the Prophets, Robert St. John, Melvin Powers Wilshire Book Company, Hollywood, 1952, p. 106.

Document K: “*The Jewish State*”, Theodor Herzl (1896)

We cannot converse with one another in Hebrew. Who amongst us has a sufficient acquaintance with Hebrew to ask for a railway ticket in that language? Such a thing cannot be done. Yet the difficulty is very easily circumvented. Every man can preserve the language in which his thoughts are at home. Switzerland affords a conclusive proof of the possibility of a federation of tongues.

Source: The Jewish State, Theodor Herzl, Vienna, 1896 (Translated by Sylvie d'Avigdor, and published by Nutt, London, England, 1896.)

**Document L: “A History of Israel”, Howard M. Sachar,
(1976)**

Ben-Yehuda’s proselytizing efforts began to have their impact. Virtually all the agricultural colonies subscribed to his newspapers and purchased his textbooks. He became a power in the Yishuv, and eventually in the Zionist world at large. By the turn of the century he was well launched on the project that would absorb the remainder of his life, the creation of a modern Hebrew dictionary. Pursuing his research with books and other materials sent him by disciples in Europe, he relentlessly tracked down the Semitic roots of words that ultimately he incorporated into a contemporary vernacular. In 1904, modestly endowed at last by grants from the Zionist Organization, from Baron Edmond de Rothschild, and other Jewish sources, Ben-Yehuda published the first volume of the dictionary. It was virtually a thesaurus – indeed, an encyclopedia – of the Hebrew language, a monumental work of scholarship. He would complete three more volumes before his death, and afterward the undertaking would be expanded by his successors into a seventeen-volume series, the definitive basis for a revived spoken and written medium.

In putting Hebrew to vernacular use, moreover, Ben-Yehuda counted heavily on the Yishuv’s teachers. At the turn of the century the largest number of these was employed by the Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden. By 1914, the Hilfsverein operated a network of fifty schools throughout the Yishuv, from kindergartens through secondary institutions, providing instruction for 7,000 youngsters. Although German was used predominantly as a second language, it was due mainly to Ben-Yehuda’s efforts that the Hilfsverein laid renewed emphasis upon Hebrew studies. The Alliance schools, too, were conducting the major portion of their instruction in the Hebrew language, as were the schools in the Zionist agricultural colonies. Additionally, sixty Zionist schools in the towns and outlying farm colonies, comprising 2,600 pupils, were using Hebrew as their sole medium of instruction. This program was decisively augmented by the iron willpower of the Zionist settlers themselves, and notably the immigrants of the Second Aliyah. Plainly it was an excruciating ordeal for Yiddish- and Russian-speaking Jews to employ Hebrew as their daily idiom at home and in the field, when every instinct cried out for relaxation. But they submitted to this discipline as tenaciously as they faced the other hardships of life in Palestine. Most of the Zionist farmers and workers by then had accepted fully Ben-Yehuda’s contention: a nation was its language, no less than its

sweat and blood. The teachers in the various schools shared the little philologist's sense of commitment. In 1903 they organized themselves into a Hebrew Teachers' Association, which instituted its own qualifying examinations for instructors.

Ironically, it was Germany's *Drang nach Osten*, an imperialist expansion into the Middle East during the last years before the World War, that threatened the impressive progress of this Hebraization. As conscious or unconscious agents of German influence in Palestine, the directors of the Hilfsverein schools began offering a number of courses taught exclusively in the German language. Examinations were conducted increasingly in German. Yet the issue of Hebraism versus Germanism did not become urgent until plans were laid to establish a Haifa Technical Institute. Funds for such a "Technion" (or Technikum, in German) had been made available by the estate of Wolf Wissotzky, the Russian Jewish tea magnate. The JNF supplied the land in Haifa, with the Hilfsverein and individual philanthropists contributing additional sums. As the administering agency, the Hilfsverein was determined that the Technion should be the very capstone of the Yishuv's educational structure – and also, not incidentally, a spectacular example of *Deutsche Kultur*. In recognition of this goal, the German foreign undersecretary, Dr. Arthur von Zimmermann, personally sought and obtained Constantinople's approval to erect the school's first building, which was completed in 1913. Meanwhile, the German Jewish members of the Technion's board of governors proposed that all technical subjects be taught exclusively in the German language. More than national pride animated this recommendation. German was widely recognized as the lingua franca of science. Hebrew, by contrast, was woefully deficient in technical vocabulary.

The decision nevertheless produced a wave of indignation among the Zionist settlers. Ben-Yehuda was all but apoplectic. "Blood will flow on the streets," he warned the Hilfsverein's director. At Ben-Yehuda's instigation, too, protest meetings were organized by Jewish students and teachers throughout the Yishuv. In October 1913, the Hebrew Teacher's Association proclaimed a strike in all Hilfsverein schools, and students demonstrated outside the German consulate in Jerusalem. Like the East Africa issue a decade earlier, the Technion crisis seemingly threatened the entire Hebraic nature of the Zionist renaissance. Aware of what was at stake then, the Zionist Organization immediately set about establishing more than a dozen new Hebrew-language schools for Palestine and launched a worldwide

campaign for additional funds. At last, four months later, in February 1914, the language controversy ended when the board of governors reconsidered the matter and agreed that all Technion courses thenceforth would be taught exclusively in Hebrew.

From then on the commitment to a Hebrew vernacular for the Yishuv was never in doubt. In the aftermath of the Technion battle, the Hebrew Teachers' Association, subsidized by the Zionist Organization, founded a board of education to administer the curriculum and establish teaching guidelines for all Jewish – non-Orthodox – schools in Palestine, including the Hilfsverein network. By 1916, the fulfillment of Ben-Yehuda's dream was in sight. A census that year indicated that 40 percent of the Yishuv's population (outside of the Old Orthodox community) spoke Hebrew as their first language. The little philologist's accomplishment was in every way as formidable as Herzl's, and as widely recognized. When Ben-Yehuda died in Jerusalem in December 1922, 30,000 people escorted his body to its grave, and Palestine Jewry observed three days of official mourning.

Vocabulary

Drang Nach Osten: the former German policy of eastward expansion.

Lingua franca: a language that is adopted as a common language between speakers whose native languages are different.

Source: A History of Israel, From the Rise of Zionism to Our Time, Howard M. Sachar, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 2007 (First Published 1976), p. 83-85.