

BEN YEHUDA



Basic facts about Ben Yehuda Street

- ✧ Ben Yehuda Street is one of Jerusalem's most popular hangout spots.
- ✧ Ben Yehuda Street is named after **Eliezer Ben-Yehuda** (1858-1922).
- ✧ Eliezer Ben Yehuda created the first modern **Hebrew dictionary** and helped revive the Hebrew spoken language.
- ✧ Following the Bar Kochba revolt in 135 CE, Jews entered into exile and Hebrew was no longer a spoken language—Jews spoke the native languages of wherever they lived. Over time, written work incorporated a combination of Hebrew and Aramaic languages.
- ✧ As the primary language for Jewish texts and prayer, Hebrew is known as “*Lashon HaKodesh*,” meaning “holy language.”

The Life of Eliezer Ben Yehuda

Eliezer Ben Yehuda was born in 1858 in Lithuania to a Yiddish-speaking family. Towards the end of the 19th Century, Eliezer Ben Yehuda moved to the Land of Israel. Inspired by the Enlightenment, he advocated for one single language to unite Jews. Some of his efforts included speaking Hebrew strictly at home, creating Hebrew newspapers and media, teaching Hebrew in school, and creating a modern Hebrew language dictionary.

Despite all of this, Eliezer Ben Yehuda was met with some opposition. His intentions were somewhat misunderstood and he was imprisoned and deported on several separate occasions. Nevertheless, Eliezer Ben Yehuda single-handedly transformed Hebrew as the spoken language of Israel.

At one point, early on in history, everyone was unified through sharing the same language. (Bereishis 11:1)

Everyone on earth had the **same language** and the same words.

וַיְהִי כֹל הָאָרֶץ שְׂפָה אַחַת וּדְבָרִים אַחָדִים.

Understanding the Holiness of the Hebrew Language, according to the Ramban (Commentary on Sefer Shemos 30:13)

The language of the Torah is a holy language because the words of the Torah, prophecy, and all holy things are said in this language.

לשון התורה “לשון הקודש” שהוא מפני שדברי התורה והנבואות וכל דברי קדושה כולם בלשון ההוא נאמרו.

Etymology of Hebrew words you may use on Ben Yehuda Street:

שְׁקָל – *SHEH-kel*

(n.) The type of currency used in Israel

Comes from the word “*lishkol*” which means “to weigh.”

עוֹלָה – *o-LEH*

(v.) To go up/cost

According to biblical Hebrew, עולה can also mean “counted in/considered.”

Consider this: Typically, we count things we care about and price it according to how much we value it.

גְּלִידָה – *glee-DAH*

(n.) Ice Cream

Derives from the word *glid* (גליד) meaning “ice.” In Aramaic, גלידא is used as a translation of *kerach* (קררח), ice.

Glid also derives from the root גלד, meaning “to freeze, congeal, or to gel.”

מִסְעָדָה – *miss-a-DAH*

(n.) Restaurant

Derives from the Biblical Hebrew verb סעד, meaning “to hold up” or strengthen. The word “*seudah*” (meal) comes from this same root.

Consider this: Food can provide support or strength.

תַּפּוּז – *ta-PUZ*

(n.) Orange

The Hebrew word for orange (*tapuz*) is a combination of the Hebrew words for “apple” (*tapu’ach* – תפוח) and “golden” (*zahav* – זהב). An orange is like a “*tapu’ach zahav*” – a golden apple.

שְׁנֵיָה – *shnee-YA*

(n.) Second (1/60th of a minute)

The Hebrew word for “two” (*shnayim*) derives from the Hebrew word שנה, which means “to repeat” or “to teach.”