



September 2020 | תשרי תשפ"א | Newsletter #1



Welcome to the first ever English Newsletter for the Academy of the Hebrew Language

Your place for exclusive news and updates from the Academy

A Little Taste of History from Our Archive: A Call for Peace



We found in our archive a beautiful and moving document: "A Call from Jerusalem the City of Peace to the Churches of Israel, Churches, Rabbis, Mayors and All Our Sons of Israel in the Holy Land and the Diaspora."

The document was published on Tu B'Shvat, 19 January 1935, in Hebrew and English. The writer implores the Jews of the world to "reiterate with all our blessings, the request

Holidays and Jewish Texts: Rosh Hashanah



Rosh (Head)

The head is the highest part of the human body, similarly to the highest part of inanimate objects, such as the 'top of the mountain', 'the top of the ladder', 'the top of the page'. Compared to a human's head, an animal's head is in front and is therefore, opposite their tail. This is why we are asking on Rosh Hashanah that "we will be head and not tail".

"reiterate with all our blessings the concept that has been dearest to our people throughout the ages - it is the concept of peace", and recommends "to lead this word as a blessing in meeting a Jew and separating from one another."

The author of the Call believes that "according to this peace call each and every one of the seventeen million Jews in the world will know each other." In his view, through the blessing of peace, peace will become "an existing religious, vital and active moral value in general human life."

The author is Naftali Avrahamiyahu (1889–1973). Before immigrating to Israel in 1906 or 1907, he spoke Hebrew in a Spanish syllable. Abrahamiah published two pamphlets for the advancement of Hebrew: "The Assignment of Language to the People" (1927) and "True Hebrew Reading" (1929).

The Call for Peace was published in the journal "The Echo," a nationally religious-ultra-Orthodox journal (published in Jerusalem 1953-1925). The author published the Call once again in the weekly "The World" on the third of Tamuz (July 4, 1935), edited by Dr. David Yellin, and announced by the Chief Rabbi of Israel Hagr"a Kook.

The word Rosh is also used to describe the front of objects, such as the head of the bed, and the head of the table. Another way the word Rosh is used, is as a leader - moving forward, ahead of others for example: the head of the city (=mayor), the head of the group (=leader).

Rosh can also be related to time, and more specifically, to the concept of beginning – in Hebrew you will find the words Reshit and Rishon which mean 'first' and have the same root as the word Rosh. This meaning connects to the meaning of a head as a front end. Thus 'Rosh Chodesh' is the beginning of the month, and 'Rosh HaShanah' is the beginning of the year.

Shanah (Year)

The word Shanah is common to the Semitic family. Medieval grammarians believed that there was a connection between Shanah and the word Shnaim (=two) and the verb Shanah (=repeated). However, other languages would indicate that these are different roots (for example, the Aramaic equivalent of Shanah). Some scholars associate Shanah with the practice Shanah and hypothesize that it is named after the change of seasons and times, while others consider it a primal Semitic word unrelated to other words.

What's in a Name:

Jonathan



Jonathan is a common male given name, originally from the Bible. According to the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, the name Yehonatan was given to at least 1,916 babies in the last two years, and another 1,351 babies were named Yonatan (Jonathan). In the US, there are 519,189 people named Jonathan, and it was the 31st most popular first name in 2011, according to the SSA. In Israel, "Yoni" is a common nickname for Yonatan, similar to the nickname Jonny in English.

Yonatan or Yehonatan? In the Bible these are two forms of the same name. We can see this, for example, in chapter 19 of Samuel A "And Saul spoke to *Yonatan* his son, and to all his servants, that they should slay David; but *Yehonatan*, Saul's son, delighted much in David" (Verse 1).

Ten people named Jonathan are mentioned in the Bible - the most famous being Saul's eldest son, which was also king David's close friend.

It is generally assumed and accepted that the original form of the name is Yehonatan = Yeho Natan, meaning "God gave" (similar to the meaning of the biblical names Netanyahu, Mattaniah or Matanyahu).

Hebrew Words in

Other Languages



Many Hebrew words were borrowed from other foreign languages, but did you know that the opposite happens, too? Many languages around the world borrow words from Hebrew. Here are some Hebrew words used in other languages:

- The biblical words "*Hallelujah*" (prevalent in the book of Psalms, meaning "praise the lord") and "*Amen*" (which means trust and consent) can be found in prayers in many languages.
- The word "*Sabbath*" (Shabbat which is Saturday in Hebrew) was used in many languages: Sobota in Russian, Samedi in French, Samstag in German and Szombat in Hungarian.
- Arabic embraced the words heaven (*Gan Eden* in Hebrew) and hell (*Gehenom*): Jannat Eden and Jahanam (in the same sense as in Hebrew).
- The word Armageddon that describes the doomsday and the end of the world according to the Christian faith, is actually a Greek disruption of the name "Mount Megiddo" (*Har Megiddo* in Hebrew) where things are about to occur.
- The phrase "Tohu VaVohu" originally from the book of Genesis (meaning a riot, a mess) is used in German to describe the same meaning, and spelled Tohuwabohu.



News, Updates and Events

The Academy's New Center

- The Academy recently initiated the construction of a new Center in Jerusalem's National Quarter. The new, state-of-the-art facility will enable the Academy to be housed on a prestigious and meaningful site commensurate with its mission. In partnership with the *Association of Architects in Israel*, the Academy is in the process of conducting a design competition for the *Minveh*. The competition is open to licensed Israeli architects, and architects abroad. The first stage of the competition was anonymous with over 100 entries, from which 5 planners have advanced to the final stage. The selected design is expected after the High Holy Days.
- Over the next couple of weeks, representatives of the Academy will meet with each of the 5 selected architects. They will present their plan and participate in a Q&A, and the winning design will be determined. In the next stage, there will be a panel to select a Construction Director and a plan will be made for the Hebrew Museum. The Academy is simultaneously raising funds for the *Minveh* through an exciting Capital Campaign, [*Linking the Generations: A Campaign for the Academy*](#).

Look out for further announcements in our next newsletter!



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