With this month of May, Israel’s 70th year of Independence ends. In honor of this prophetic year, I have written about two of the most important people in Israel’s modern history, Theodore Herzl, the Father of Modern Israel, and Eliezer Ben Yehuda, the Father of the Modern Hebrew Language. Most significantly, for the person who is spiritually sensitive, one can see the guiding hand of Providence upon Herzl, and upon Ben Yehuda’s entire family. They all went through unbelievable hardship, but were used by God for His purposes. Therefore, they succeeded in their mission. I wrote two episodes on Herzl and eight episodes (including this Epilogue) on Ben Yehuda.

You will find all these episodes in the maozisrael.org archives, beginning with May 2018, or maozisrael.org/herzl-ben-yehuda.

Eliezer Ben Yehuda, Father of the Modern Hebrew Language, believed, when no one else did, that the language of the Bible could be revived to become the language of a new Jewish nation.
Death in 1951. It is now a cultural

However, Hemda, his second wife

saw this house, a gift from the

American Jewish Community, as

a lived in it for thirty years until her

He never

But how was the average reader of his

newspaper, who obviously had a very

small vocabulary, able to remember

all the new words of each week's

newspaper?

And what about the few bold pioneers

teaching Hebrew at their makeshift

schools in their settlements? They were

without a single Hebrew textbook. So,

Eliezer began helping them compose

such textbooks—not just to learn the

language—but to teach math, history

and everything else in Hebrew.

Eliezer became increasingly aware of

the greatest need of all: "Our crying

need is for an up-to-date dictionary.

Here we are trying to teach people
to speak a language and there is no
dictionary of that language!" In fact,

there wasn’t even a word for dictionary!

Actually, there wasn’t a Hebrew word

for “newspaper”—or “printer”—or

“post office”—or “stamp”—to mail his

newspaper to his few subscribers abroad

or in Palestine. There wasn’t a word

for “subscriber” or “mail” either.

Yet Ben Yehuda had a mission from

which he never wavered—to raise “a

spoken Hebrew language” from the

dead. To create new words, Eliezer

found himself searching the Bible, the

Talmud, and all the rabbinical books.

But many of the needed words didn’t

exist in any of those books, either.

When his first child was born in 1882,

Eliezer’s Hebrew world expanded

to the need of modern words such as

“diaper.” One can imagine why Jews

of the late 19th century considered it

utterly impossible to resurrect a dead

language. It had never happened in the

history of mankind. The idea was

thought to be pure madness. There was

not a single human being on earth who

spoke Hebrew as his mother tongue.

But Eliezer had a dream and a plan. He

would make his firstborn “the grand

experiment.”

The Grand Experiment

When the news spread that his new son

Ben Zion would not be allowed to even

hear any other language except Hebrew,

the people of Jerusalem actually

believed the boy would grow up a

disabled “idiot.” Nevertheless, Eliezer

and his faithful wife spoke only Hebrew

in his presence. This experiment forced

them to constantly come up with new

words that would meet the needs of

families living in the late 19th century

lifestyle of the West.

In 1884, Eliezer founded his own

weekly newspaper and started printing

a list of a few new Hebrew words in
each issue. With Eliezer’s passion and

example, little by little, the concept of a

modern Hebrew language was beginning
to take root among at least a few Jews in Palestine.

But there was another seemingly

impossible challenge to overcome.

As new immigrants began teaching

Hebrew in their schools, the teachers

taught according to their taste and

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example, little by little, the concept of a

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Besides, how do you pronounce a word

that didn’t exist until today?

Even before Eliezer moved to Palestine, he

was aware there was an Ashkenazi

accent spoken by Orthodox Jews from

Europe and Russia, and a Sephardic

accent of Jews from Arabic nations.

(The Yemenite accent was considered

the “purest” of all.) Then there were the

natural accents of immigrants whose

mother tongue was French, German,

Yiddish or Arabic.

A Language Needs Rules

When Eliezer and Devora spoke with

their few friends, they could use the

language however they wished. But if

Eliezer wanted to circulate a modern
tongue with the goal of making it

universally spoken among Jews in

the Holy Land, the words had to be

precise and accurate, according to

strict linguistic rules. Therefore, Ben

Yehuda became a self-taught scientific

lexicographer.

Did Anyone Speak Hebrew?

It is true that in some parts of the

world there were Jews who had to

conduct business with other Jews who

had no common language with each

other except their Hebrew prayers.

They created a kind of pidgin, a semi-

language that included words, sounds,

body language, simplified syntax, and

limited vocabulary. It, of course, was

never learned as a first language.

But this limited speech encouraged the

young Ben Yehuda even before he went to

Palestine to believe that Hebrew could

again be spoken. It is estimated that about 50% of male

Jews of the 19th century could read the

Torah and rabbinical books. But here

was the real issue. In Arabic countries, Hebrew literacy was

high, as the Jewish communities were more segregated in

Islamic cultures. Their religion was the

center of their lives. But, in Europe, the

Age of Enlightenment had penetrated

deeper into Jewish culture. Many

Jewish leaders in the West believed Jews

should completely assimilate into the

local society and culture, giving up their

language—but to teach math, history

and everything else in Hebrew.

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and everything else in Hebrew.
One of the 17 volumes is headquarters in Jerusalem.

**The Last Of The Last**

In the same decade the Russian-born Ben Yehuda immigrated to Jerusalem, the Jewish poet, Yehuda Leib Gordon (1830-1892), wrote: “Perhaps I am the last of Zion’s poets, and you are the last readers.” Gordon himself was a part of the Jewish Enlightenment; he saw little hope for Hebrew becoming a daily spoken language or even a language of literature.

He understood Hebrew and Zionism were one and the same. There would be no Jewish nation without the Hebrew language. There would be no Hebrew language without a Jewish nation. Ben Yehuda wrote, “The Hebrew language can live only if we revive the nation and return it to the fatherland.”

Alone and unique from all the visionaries of the Jewish national renaissance, Ben Yehuda saw the whole picture: the need for a people wedded to its land speaking its own language. Hebrew nationalism, to Ben Yehuda, was both the return to the historical homeland and the revival of the Hebrew language. Ben Yehuda thus launched his great undertaking of creating The Complete Dictionary of Ancient and Modern Hebrew:

**Irreplaceable Hemda**

One last thought. The dictionary never have been created had it not been for his second wife, Hemda, who married Eliezer six months after her sister Devora died. She labored with Eliezer every day through their 30 years of marriage. By the time he died, they had completed seven volumes of his dictionary. She had raised the money for all of them.

For the next three decades, 1922 to 1951, Hemda did everything in her power to complete the dictionary, along with her son Ehud. She raised the funds for another six volumes, averaging 600 pages each.

**A Legacy Like No Other**

Today there is no special memorial for Ben Yehuda, not even a modest museum. However almost every town of any size has a Ben Yehuda street! Even so, the average Israeli knows surprisingly little about the life of Ben Yehuda.

Ben Yehuda’s original dictionary is out of print. If you are fortunate, you may be able to find one for sale on eBay. (I just did—although two volumes are missing!) But he has a legacy like no other. Every Israeli who opens his or her mouth to speak their native tongue today is a living memorial to Eliezer Ben Yehuda.

Ben Yehuda, then, was the prophet, the theoretician and tactician, the sign and symbol of the revival of the language. He himself wrote in 1908 in his newspaper, The Deer:

“For everything there is needed only one wise, clever and active man, with the initiative to devote all his energies to it, and the matter will progress, all obstacles in the way notwithstanding... In every new event, every step, even the smallest in the path of progress, it is necessary that there be one pioneer who will lead the way without leaving any possibility of turning back.”

Language and land created a physical foundation for the nation. Yet the greatest “impossibility” is still to come! It will happen when God’s Chosen People return to their God with all their hearts, souls and strength. They will not only be God’s beloved, but He will be their Beloved God. And I am sure they will worship Him and their Messiah in the beautiful Hebrew language!

To this writer, Ben Yehuda’s life is a magnificent example and inspiration to all born-again believers as to how God searches for even one person to stand in the gap to fulfill God’s vision, His desires and His purposes. Even now, God is looking for those to fulfill His plan for our generation.
Ben Yehuda spent most of his life searching for ancient Hebrew words that had been lost. He also sought to find the origin of words and examples of their usage, as well as their changes in meaning throughout the centuries. He consulted libraries all over Europe and the Middle East. And when he moved to the United States during World War I to escape Turkish persecution, he spent four years searching the great libraries of the United States.

When he fled Palestine in 1914, he had already accumulated about 450,000 notes concerning sources for Hebrew words. His wife, Hemda, packed them up and turned them over to the American consulate in Jerusalem for safe-keeping. Those notes were taken from over 40,000 books he had consulted that had been written over a period of more than two thousand years.

Those who thought that his dictionary was going to be a mere list of Hebrew words with brief definitions were in for a great surprise. That was to be unlike any dictionary ever compiled. His goal was no less than an encyclopedia of the Hebrew language. He dug out and listed 335 different ways in which it was possible to use the Hebrew word lo, meaning “no” or “not.” There were 210 “witnesses” for ken (yes).

“Witnesses” from Everywhere

Many of his “witnesses” were quotations from the Bible and other religious books, but there were often long passages from secular literature, from the works of little-known poets, or from manuscripts he had found somewhere in a distant library. These quotations were interesting reading in themselves. They gave pictures of the life of early Jews in their homes, market places, fields and ghettos.

A Work Of Multi-Languages

After each Hebrew word would come the translation into French, German and English. This made the work unique; a multilingual dictionary in Arabic, Assyrian, Aramaic, Greek and Latin.

Moreover, it was a thesaurus as well as a book of definitions. After each word, Ben Yehuda listed all the other words which were in any way connected. The reader was given the origin of each word, an explanation of its construction, a comparison with its sister words in other Semitic languages, the changes it had undergone down through the ages, and all its nuances, shades, forms, inflections and uses.

After each word were examples of its usage, which Ben Yehuda called “witnesses” or “proofs.” With a language as old as Hebrew there were bound to be many more shadings and colorations of meaning, and even conflicting uses of a word.

He provided synonyms and antonyms. He identified the origin of each word and provided an explanation of its construction, a comparison with its sister words in other Semitic languages, the changes it had undergone down through the ages, and all its nuances, shades, forms, inflections and uses.

He dug out and listed 335 different ways in which it was possible to use the Hebrew word lo, meaning “no” or “not.” There were 210 “witnesses” for ken (yes).

He was the first to make a regular and systematic practice of coining Hebrew words to meet the practical demands constantly being made of the language in daily speech, journalism, science and literature.

In his later years, he co-founded and established the ruling principles for the the Language Council. The Council gave way to the Academy of the Hebrew Language, which adopted Ben Yehuda’s rules and took upon itself his life’s work. The Academy, still housed at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, approves new Hebrew words to meet the ever-evolving needs of contemporary Israeli society.

The little marks which Ben Yehuda sprinkled through his manuscript were marks of his honesty. These symbols appeared alongside words which he himself had created. “If put them in so the reader can see immediately that these are new words, and if he does not like them he should consider them as non-existent.”

He provided examples of the 500,000 quotations of word sources.

Ben Yehuda catalogued in creating his Hebrew dictionary.

Seven volumes were completed before his death. All volumes were completed from 1908 to 1919.
These books by contemporary men and women who have proven lives of commitment and maturity, have a message for this generation. Thankfully, Israelis still read books! Take a look at this selection of books we are currently in the process of translating and publishing.

We invite you to partner with us in getting the most important message in the whole world to our Israeli people. It is their time!

John Bevere and his wife passed through sad, difficult and barren seasons in their lives. Was it punishment? Sin? Missing the mark? Was God angry with them?

This book explores the purpose of a wilderness experience with God. The children of Israel were suffering the same problems every child of God struggles with in life. They were looking for miracles, but weren’t aware they needed, most of all, to pursue a deeper relationship with their God.

When I read this book, I immediately sent it to two close friends going through a severe and seemingly hopeless valley at this time. As Israeli believers read this book, they will find it points to a Biblically based path out of their desert to greater spiritual maturity.

This remarkable pastor, who nurtured Michael W. Smith and Amy Grant, has a pure and powerful love for the Israeli people. He wrote this book for Christians.

So why translate it into Hebrew? The Israeli nation in the last half-century has gone through a true revelation and revolution. Fifty years ago, Israelis were convinced Christianity was their greatest enemy, and viewed all of Nazi Europe as typical Christians who were haters of Jews.

Today, the Israeli people, from top officials on down, now see Evangelical Christians as their greatest friends and supporters in the world. Finto’s book will explain why. His love just shines through! It will, no doubt, cause many Israelis to hunger after the God of Israel and His Jewish Son, Yeshua!

At Maoz, our hearts are constantly searching for every good book we can possibly publish to help children and teenagers of Messianic families stay true to their faith through those critical years. The Five Love Languages series are our #1 most-requested books. Many non-believers also ask for these books.

Each child is different, but these godly authors, with a lifetime of experience in pediatrics, psychiatry and family life, provide the well-tested tools of quality time, words of affirmation, gifts, acts of service and physical touch. This book will help Israeli Messianic Jews and Christian Arabs parent their children in a way that results in a warm, close, faith-filled family. Do Israelis need this book? YES, they do!

Maoz has published scores of books critically important for the discipling and growth of Israeli believers in Yeshua. But what about the person who shows interest in your witness, but knows virtually nothing about the Gospel? This book is for them!

There are very few reader-friendly books that are easy to comprehend and yet answer, in a compelling and captivating way, the most important questions of life for the non-believer. From a Jewish point of view, Bernis examines a wide variety of spiritually-diverse subjects such as angels, ghosts, aliens, the lives of Bernie Maddox and Elvis Presley, the thoughts of Stephen Hawking and Albert Einstein, plus near-death experiences of unbelievers and believers in Yeshua.

His conclusions are not only thought-provoking but, I believe, will be convincing to many Israelis searching for Truth. I can think of several friends right now, to whom I have been witnessing, and I can’t wait to give this book to them!
A TEACHING ON IMMERSION (BAPTISM)
A Fundamental Element to Walking in the New Covenant
By Ari Sorko-Ram

In Jewish culture, there is great opposition to a Jewish follower of Yeshua being baptized, as it is wrongly thought the Jewish person will no longer be a Jew. Nevertheless, water baptism is a fundamental element for every Jew or Gentile walking in the New Covenant. It is a commandment of the Messiah—not an optional choice. Therefore, it is critical for every Israeli believer to know why he or she should be baptized, and how God will use this act of obedience to strengthen their faith and increase their ability to hear His “still, small voice.”

This book takes the reader through the Old and New Testament—laying a firm foundational understanding of immersion. It is sure to give the reader—both Jew and Gentile—new insight!
LEAVE A LEGACY OF LOVE, REAP A HARVEST OF BENEFITS

We invite you to leave a legacy of outreach to the Jewish people for ages to come, in this simple but profoundly important way—and experience the blessing of God as you bless Israel!

By establishing a strategic will or estate plan:

- You can provide for your family, even after you die
- You can have the joy of knowing you are making a difference for eternity, and
- You can leave a legacy of love for God's chosen people.

Please contact:

Christy in USA 800.856.7060 | Helio in Canada 866.712.0188 | Brian in UK +44.0173.288.6441

Or consult your lawyer to include a bequest in your will for Maoz Israel Ministries.

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