

# Holy Language

Why is the language of the Torah called Lashon Hakodesh, holy?

Let us begin with the Pnei Moshe, who remarks (Yerushalmi Megila 1:9) that the Hebrew language is a clear, concise, refined language. This makes it optimal for use in speech.

Now, let's move on to the Ramban (Ramban, Shemos 30:13). He explains that the language of the Torah is called Lashon Hakodesh because divrei Torah, prophesy, and words of kedusha were said in this language. This is the language that Hashem uses to talk to prophets and people, such as when He gave the Ten Commandments. This is the language that contains names of Hashem, such as *Keil* and *Elokim*.

The Rambam (Moreh Nevuchim 3:8) teaches that Lashon Hakodesh is called so because of its clean terminology. This includes words such as *biah*, *tzoah* and *l'hashtin*.

On this topic, let us explain why the *shekel hakodesh* is called so. This is because of the different mitzvos that were determined by it, such as *eruchin* and *pidyon bechor*, redeeming the firstborn.

In explaining the advantages of davening in Lashon Hakodesh, the Biur Halacha (101 s.v. *yachol*) writes that when the Anshei Knesses Hagedolah instituted the nusach of davening, there were 120 elders and many prophets. They counted and weighed each bracha with its words and combination of its letters with many high and lofty secrets. When we say the words, even if we don't know how to have kavana, it is still a proper tefila. This is because the words themselves activate kedusha in the upper spheres, in contrast to words davened in another language. Interestingly, the Baal Hatanya (Torah Ohr, Mishpatim, s.v. *k'maaseh*) tells us that when one uses a language for Torah and mitzvos, the language is elevated.

In the brachos we recite, the combination of letters and their order are arranged exactly and specifically in a unique way

to bring out the energy of that bracha. For example, in Shemoneh Esrei in the bracha of Bareich Aleinu which is the bracha for *parnassah*, the combination of the letters brings out the energy for *parnassah*. On a similar note, the Ramchal writes (Derech Hashem 4:2, Talmud Torah) that when one says the words of Torah, one draws down the *hashpaah*.

We know that Lashon Hakodesh created the world as the Midrash says that Hashem looked into the Torah and created the world (Breishis Rabba 1:1). Consequently, Lashon Hakodesh is unlike other languages in that the word tells us about the object. For this reason, the word *דבר* means both a word and an object. We have many examples of this:

(1) A hand, which contains 14 joints, is called *יד*. What is the gematria of *יד*? 14! Furthermore, 14 is comprised of 1 and 4.  $1+4=5$ , referring to the five fingers. Additionally, the letter *ה*, which has a gematria of 5, is comprised of a *י* and *ד* (the *י* is the bottom left part of the *ה* while the *ד* is the remainder of the *ה*). This spells the word *יד*, as there are five fingers on the hand.

(2) The word *שן*, tooth, is related to *שנוי*, change, since food goes through a process of change while it is in one's mouth as the food enters the mouth whole and is then ground up by the teeth. *שן* also means to repeat since the teeth repeat the grinding process until the food is thoroughly ground. The word *שן* also means sharp, as in *שיננה*, since a tooth is sharp, enabling it to grind up the food.

(3) We know that a firstborn son receives a double inheritance. As a result, each letter that comprises the word *בכר* is double the numerical value of the letter preceding it.

That is, *ב*, in gematria, 2 is double *א*, 1, *כ*, 20, is twice 10, *ק*. Finally, 200, *ר*, is two times 100, *ק*.

In light of this we can explain why *לשון הקודש* is called a *ברורה*, clear language (Tzefanya 3:9, Ibn Ezra). Indeed, *בשפה*

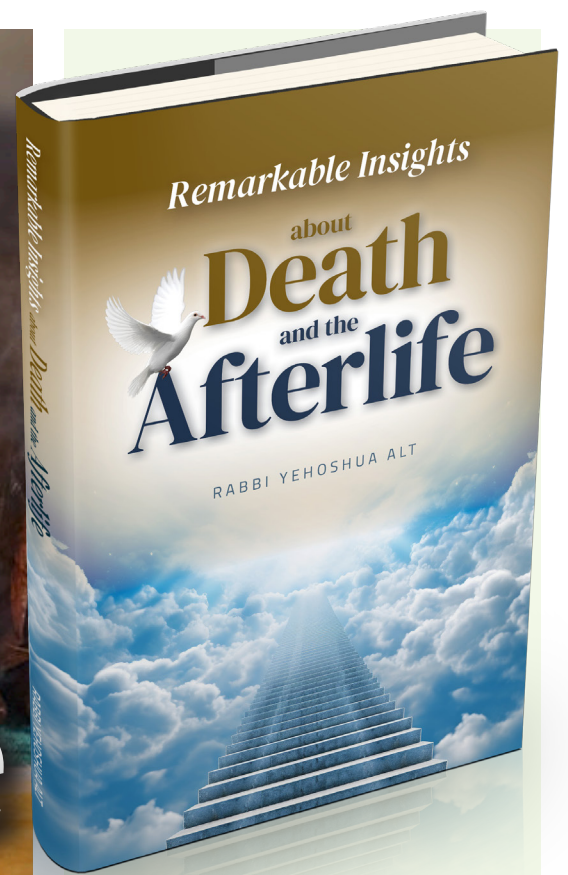
has the same numerical value as *לשון הקודש* (Siddur Yaavetz, Yotzer Ohr). Similarly, the Baal Haturim to Breishis 11:1 (see Rashi there) comments that *שפה אחת* has an identical sum to *לשון הקודש*.

Taking this a step further, each letter in *לשון הקודש* has its own meaning. Examples: *ב* is *בית*, house, when spelled out. *ג* spelled out is *גומל*, to give. This is in contrast to the letters of other languages. This contributes to the meaning of other letters that join with it in forming a word. For example, *פרד* means to separate. This is a combination of the meaning of the letters that compose that word.

This can be compared to what scientists do when they break up a chemical compound into its component parts, and then call it by the combined name of those components. To illustrate: Table salt was discovered to be composed of sodium and chloride, and was therefore named sodium chloride (NaCl).

When Adam saw the different animals and birds, he was able to tell which letters brought these beings to life. This is how he was able to give them names (see Siduro Shel Shabbos 3:3:2). For instance, when he saw an ox, he realised that it comprised the letters *ש*, *ו*, *ר* and therefore gave it that name. This is what is meant by the words *וכל אשר יקרא לו האדם נפש חיה הוא שמו*, whatever man called each living creature, that remained its name (Breishis 2:19).

Let us conclude with what the Sefer Moshav Zekanim (Breishis 3:4) tells us, citing Tosafos. It says *הארץ שפה אחת*, the whole earth was of one language (Breishis 11:1). He explains that everyone spoke Lashon Hakodesh (see Rashi s.v. *safah achas*), even animals and birds. This is what is meant by *ויאמר הנחש*, the snake said (Breishis 3:4), that the snake spoke Lashon Hakodesh (see Midrash Pesikta Rabbasi, Breishis 3:1). Only after the sin of the Dor Haflaga, when language spread into 70 languages, did the animals and birds speak and communicate in their own specific language.



## RABBI YEHOSHUA ALT

The newly released book "Remarkable Insights about Death and the Afterlife" is now available (as a paperback, hardcover and digitised version) for purchase and delivery on Amazon at <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0C9NNDMNC> or Purchase it at <https://amzn.to/3eyh5xP>, or by sending an email to [yalt3285@gmail.com](mailto:yalt3285@gmail.com). This extensive and thought-provoking book addresses these questions and many more, providing transformative insights. With a collection comprising over 70 meticulously crafted essays, it eloquently articulates the Torah's viewpoint regarding death and the afterlife. This work stands as an invaluable resource, facilitating readers in acquiring a deeper comprehension of this vital subject. It makes a great gift for friends, relatives, business associates and learning partners.

Some of the questions discussed in this book are the following.

- What is the ultimate way to elevate the soul of one's parents?
- How does the death process rectify a person's soul?
- What profound life lessons can we learn from gravestones?
- In what ways can the concept of reincarnation help us better understand life?
- What is the idea behind davening at gravesites?
- What will happen at the Resurrection of the Dead?

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