

Notes on "Tongues" Radio Episode

Notes assembled by Christopher Fredrickson

www.LapidJudaism.com

email: evedbanah@gmail.com

Examples of the word לִשׁוֹן used in the Tanach:

(verses cited from the Orthodox Jewish Bible)

"And Moshe said unto Hashem, O Adonoi, I am not an ish devarim, neither heretofore, nor since Thou hast spoken unto Thy eved; but I am slow of speech, and of a slow lashon."

(Exodus 4:10)

Hashem shall bring a nation against thee from afar, from the ketzeh ha'aretz, as swift as the nesher flieth; a nation whose lashon thou shalt not understand;

(Deuteronomy 28:49)

For with stammering safah (lips) and with lashon acheret (another tongue, different tongue) will He speak to HaAm Hazeh.

(Isaiah 28:11)

Hinei, the Shem of Hashem cometh from afar, burning is His anger, and heavy is His cloud; His safatayim (lips) are full of indignation, and His lashon is like a devouring eish;

(Isaiah 30:27)

The levav also of the rash shall understand da'as, and the lashon of the stammerers shall be ready

to speak plainly.

(Isaiah 32:4)

Thou shalt no longer see a fierce people, a people of unfathomable language that is incomprehensible, of a stammering lashon, that thou canst not understand.

(Isaiah 33:19)

have sworn by Myself, the Word has gone out of My mouth of tzedakah (righteousness), and shall not yashuv (return, be revoked), that unto Me kol berekh (every knee) shall bow, kol lashon (every tongue) shall swear.

(Isaiah 45:23)

Then said they, Come and let us devise plans against Yirmeyah; for the torah shall not perish from the kohen, nor etzah from the chacham, nor the davar from the navi. Come, and let us attack him with the lashon, and let us not give

*heed to any of his devarim.
(Jeremiah 18:18)*

*Hineni, I am against the nevi'im, saith Hashem, that use their [own] lashon, and say, He saith.
(Jeremiah 23:31)*

*For thou art not sent to an Am Imkei Safah (a people of indecipherable language) and of obscure lashon, but to Bais Yisroel;
(Ezekiel 3:5)*

*Not to amim rabbim of indecipherable language and obscure lashon whose words thou canst not understand. Surely, had I sent thee to them, they would have paid heed unto thee.
(Ezekiel 3:6)*

*Save my nefesh, Hashem, from sefat sheker (lying lips), and from lashon remiyyah (a tongue of deceit).
(Psalm 120:2)*

*What shall be given unto thee? Or what shall be done unto thee, thou lashon remiyyah?
(Psalm 120:3)*

*The lashon of the tzaddik is as choice kesef; the lev of the resha'im is of little worth.
(Proverbs 10:20)*

*The peh (mouth) of the tzaddik bringeth forth chochmah, but the lashon tahpukhot (tongue of perversion, distortion) shall be cut off.
(Proverbs 10:31)*

*There is one who speaketh rash words like the wounding of a cherev, but the lashon of the chachamim promotes marpeh (healing).
(Proverbs 12:18)*

*The lip of emes shall be established forever, but a lashon sheker is but for a moment.
(Proverbs 12:19)*

*The lashon of chachamim useth da'as aright, but the peh (mouth) of kesilim (fools) poureth out folly.
(Proverbs 15:2)*

A marpeh lashon (a tongue of healing) is an Etz Chayyim, but selef (perversity) therein is crushing to the ruach (spirit).

(Proverbs 15:4)

The plans of the lev belong to adam, and the answer of the lashon is from Hashem.

(Proverbs 16:1)

Commentaries

"Acts 4b-13 The miraculous event accomplished through the Holy Spirit amounts to a reversal of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9). Then God confounded the speech of people misusing their unity for sinful purposes (the English word "babble" comes directly from the Hebrew). Here God enabled people whose different languages separated them to understand each other praising God, which is the proper use of unity.

There were two reactions to what God did — as usual (Yn 7:43&N). Religious Jews (y. 5) were amazed and confused (v. 12) but open to being taught. Others(v. 13) ridiculed the talmidim.

Everyone heard them speaking in his own language (v. 6), and a representative list of Roman Empire nations is given (vv. 9-11). This corresponds closely to a Talmudic concept of how God dealt with the nations:

"Rabbi Yochanan said, 'What is meant by the verse, "Adonai gives a word; those spreading [it] are a great army" (Psalm 68:12(11))? It means that every single word going forth from the Almighty was split into seventy languages. The school of Rabbi Ishmael taught that the verse, "[Is not my word...] like a hammer that breaks a rock into pieces?" (Jeremiah 23:29), means that just as a hammer is divided into many sparks [when it hits a rock or piece of metal], so every single word that went out from the Holy One, blessed be he, split into seventy languages.'"(Shabbat 88b)

In rabbinic thought seventy is the traditional number of Gentile nations and the traditional number of languages of mankind. Although the number of tongues mentioned in the present passage falls short of seventy, enough are mentioned to allow the understanding that God is speaking here through Yeshua's faithful talmidim to all humanity.

But here is more." In Exodus 19:16, what the people heard was not "thunders," as in most translations, but "voices" (Hebrew kolot). So just as from the above midrash we can learn that at Sinai God's "great voice" (Deuteronomy 5:19(22)) into the seventy languages of the Gentiles, so also from the present passage we learn explicitly that at Pentecost the praises of God were similarly heard in the various Gentile languages.

Midrash Tanchuma 25 says that at Sinai the people we're confused when they heard God's "voices" coming from every direction. Similarly, the people hearing the languages of the nations at Pentecost were confused, overwhelmed and amazed (vv. 5-13) - as is always the case when God appears; compare Psalm 18-7-15 and Job 38-42."

(Jewish New Testament Commentary by David H Sten)

(8) The ability to speak in different kinds of tongues. "Speaking in tongues" has become known more widely in the twentieth century than in centuries past, since there has been an entire movement within Christianity identified with it, namely,

Pentecostalism, or, more recently, the Charismatic Movement among mainline denominations. The term means speaking in a language one has not learned.

The New Testament seems to mention or imply at least four different kinds of tongues:

(a) Speaking in ordinary human languages other than those one knows (Ac 2:4-11, 10:44-46, 19:6, and, some believe, by implication, 8:15-17, 9:17-20), as "a sign that the Holy Spirit has come to dwell in God's people (Ac 1:8, 2:12-21, 10:47-48, 11:15-17). "Non-charismatics" those today who do not speak in tongues, and "anti-charismatics," those today who oppose speaking in tongues, understand this "sign" to be limited to the representative groups who received the Gospel — the Jews in Acts 2, the Samaritan "quasi-Jews" in Acts 8, the Gentiles in Acts 10-11, and the special group who believed in Yochanan the Immerser but knew nothing of Yeshua in Acts 19. These groups represent the spreading of the umbrella of God's people from the Jewish center, Jerusalem, to wider and wider circles of humanity, in keeping with the program of Ac 1:8. On the other hand, Charismatics and Pentecostals sometimes apply this same "sign" to individual believers and consider them to have been immersed (baptized) in the Holy Spirit only if they have spoken in tongues; for them Sha'ul's experience reported in Acts 9 is important because it is taken as the normative example of a single individual's receiving the Holy Spirit.

(b) Speaking in ordinary human languages other than those one has learned not as a sign of receiving the Holy Spirit, but rather as a miracle from God. For example, one Pentecostal group reported in its denominational publication that one of their missionaries in Africa was saved from the soup pot of a cannibalistic tribe when he began to speak in the language of that tribe, a language he had never learned.

(c) Speaking publicly in a worship service in a language one has not learned, a language which may not be a human language at all but Possibly a "Tongue of Angels" (13:1). That seems to be the "gift of tongues" concerning which Sha'ul

gives rules in Chapter 14.

(d) Also in chapter 14 Sha'ul distinguishes the public "gift of tongues" from speaking privately to God in a language one has not learned; the implication may be that some who speak tongues privately to God do not have the "gift of tongues" suitable for public worship meetings.

The ability to interpret tongues (in verse 9), to give the meaning of an ordinary language of what is spoken by the "gift of tongues" (see 8(c) above) in public worship service.

(Jewish New Testament Commentary from David H Stern)

"Other languages, here, as opposed to the discussion of tongues in 1 Cor 14.6-19, the speaking is in languages that are understood by native speakers in attendance."

(Acts 2:1-13 commentary in the Jewish Annotated New Testament)

"lists nine activities manifesting the Spirit's work: (1) wisdom utterance: pronouncements of God's wisdom revealed in the death and resurrection of Jesus (see 1.30; 2.7-10); (2) knowledge utterance: proclamations about the divine nature (see 1.5; 8.7,11; Rom 15.14); (3) faith: trustworthy words as opposed to deceitful utterances (see LXX Prov 12.17); (4) healing: Jewish traditions mention the healing powers of the patriarchs, Moses, Solomon, and various prophets and rabbis; the traditions also saw healing as a manifestation of God's power (Gen 20.17; Num 12.13; 2 Chr 30.20; Sir 38.4-8; 48.23, T. Reuben 1.7; Philo, On Agriculture 95-8; Ant. 8.42; 4QPrNab ar; b. Ber. 34b); (5) miracles: attributed to patriarchs, Solomon, various prophets and rabbis, e.g., H. Oni the Circle Drawer who elicited rainfall (m. Ta'an. 3.8); (6) prophecy: speech with eschatological, ethical, or mystical insight; (7) discernment of spirits: deciding whether a spirit manifested in a person is demonic or angelic (5.12-6.11); Qumran texts mention "interrogating (drsh) their spirits (rua)" (1QS 5.20-21,23-24; 6.14; 1QSa 2.10); (8) tongues: speaking in foreign languages, including the unintelligible language of angels (see 13.1,8; 14.2; Isa 28.11 [xenolalia], Acts 2.4,11; 10.46; 2 Esd 14.40-41; Gen. Rab. 28.6; T. Job 48-50; 1 En. 71.11); (9) interpretation of tongues: Mek. Bahodesh 9 on Ex 20.15; Plutarch, Pyth. orac. 24-25."

(1 Corinthians 12:8-10 commentary from the Jewish Annotated New Testament)

All the tongues listed here are man-made; these are not angelic or heavenly. The gift of angelic tongues, the issue of genuineness aside, cannot be linked to this event in Acts 2 or to the Shavuot-Pentecost holiday. Please see footnotes on 2:17, Yochanan 20:22, and Founders of the all Gentile Church: Tertullian 155-230 CE in Appendix.

(Acts 2:4 footnote from the Aramaic English New Testament)

Rabbinic Commentaries

*R. Hanina said, "it is because their לְשׁוֹן (tongue/language) [Aramaic] is near the לְשׁוֹן (tongue/language) [Hebrew] of the Torah"
(Pesachim 87b)*

*The word went forth from the Holy One, blessed be He, to the right hand of Israel, and went around the camp of Israel, eighteen mil by eighteen mil... and the sound of it went from one end of the world to another, as it says, "the voice of the L-rd hews our flames of fire" (Psalm 29:7)... the commandment itself went in turn to each of the Israelites and said to him, "Do you agree to observe me?"
(Song of Songs Rabbah 1:13)*

*The Torah says, "And all the people saw the voices." (Exodus 20:15-18) Note that it does not say "the voice" but "the voices"; where Rabbi Yochanan said that G-d's voice, as it was uttered, split up into seventy voices, in seventy tongues, so that all the nations should understand.
(Exodus Rabbah 5:9)*

*Rabbi Yochanan said: "What is meant by the verse, 'The L-rd announced the word, and great was the company of those who proclaimed it' (Psalm 68:12(11)). Every single word that went forth from the Almighty divided up into seventy tongues."
(Shabbat 88b)*

*They brought the stones and built the alter and plastered it with lime. Then they wrote on it all the words of the Torah in seventy לְשׁוֹנוֹת (tongues), as it is written "very distinctly" (Deuteronomy 27:8)
(m. Sotah 7:5)*