

20th Century Hebraists

* [Setsuzo Kotsuji](#) Avraham ben Avraham Kotsuji will go down in history first as one of the world's most outstanding righteous gentiles, and then as one of Jewry's most outstanding converts. His total dedication to the Jewish people and his willingness to risk his life for them is an everlasting source of inspiration and a pure kiddush Hashem.

* [Shai Ish Hurwitz](#) At the center of a small circle of Hebrew writers and activists in pre-World War I Berlin was the publicist and the publisher Shai Ish Hurwitz (1861-1922), determined to save the Jewish people by his historiography. The future of the Jewish people, claimed Hurwitz, will be secured only through its past, and this past can only be expressed by the historical language - Hebrew. After his sensationalist articles had him expelled from the mainstream of East-European Cultural Zionism, Hurwitz moved to Berlin and worked there in two parallel paths: he was among the founders of the Federation (Histadrut) for Hebrew Language and Culture, which aspired to make Hebrew an integral part of the national revival, and he established the periodical He-Atid (The Future), aimed at providing Zionism with new models of national life, using critical research on neglected aspects of Jewish history. Both fields of activity were an expression of Hurwitz's belief in the strong connection between Jewish historical culture, the national future, and the Hebrew language. Based on his unconventional view of historical phenomena such as Yehuda Halevy, Hasidism, Haskalah, and Sabbateans, Hurwitz argued the need for a Hebrew revival to foster a revolutionary or even messianic movement. Hurwitz's articles, the polemics they generated, and his personality made him a unique voice of his time serving as a prism for examining the Hebrew language revival as a historical process. His activity sheds light on aspects such as the tensions among the various proponents of Zionism, the rivalry with the Yiddishist movement, the role of the Jewish past, modern forms of messianism, and above all, the reasons for making Hebrew the ultimate answer to the generation's problems.

- David Stern
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