

Multi-Gender Hebrew / Michal Shomer

Creating a New Space in the Hebrew Language

Background

Hebrew is a very gendered language – verbs, nouns, pronouns, adjectives, and almost all words, have a grammatical gender – masculine or feminine. The masculine form is considered the generic form. This poses a challenge for a progressive society that wishes to be inclusive, and that aims to promote equality for women and non-binary people. In the past few years, the role of Hebrew in the fight for gender equality has become part of the discussion in Israeli society and media. Research has shown that using the generic masculine form has a negative impact on girls and women and their chance to succeed in modern society.

Multi-Gender Hebrew

Multi-Gender Hebrew is a new set of innovative all-inclusive Hebrew letters facilitating multi-gender reading and writing (Heb: עברית רב־מגדרית), created by designer Michal Shomer. Through typographic hands-on exploration, Shomer designed the new letters as a way to address the gender challenges in the Hebrew Language. With the new Multi-Gender Hebrew letters, a third option is introduced, adding a gender-neutral expression to the written language. Multi-Gender Hebrew makes women present in the Hebrew language and forms a linguistic space for non-binary identities.

Multi-Gender Hebrew consists of 12 new characters: 11 new letters and one Nikud sign. Each new letter is composed of visual elements from one or two Hebrew letters in parallel, along with some additional typographic or stylistic alterations. In addition, a new digital keyboard was developed, which allows the user to type the new signs. A free version of Multi-Gender Hebrew was released in Feb 2021, accessible to Hebrew speakers. Many institutions in Israel have already adopted the new letters, in signage, documents, educational materials, graphics, websites, media, and more. Individuals are using the new letters, in poetry, prose, articles, personal use and so on, in Israel and around the world.

Materials

- (a) Link to Multi-Gender Hebrew's website (Hebrew), where users can explore the new letters and download the type & digital keyboard for free: multigenderhebrew.com
- (b) Links to the social media accounts of Multi-Gender Hebrew, showing many examples of how people are using the new letters –

Facebook: facebook.com/MultiGenderHebrew Instagram: instagram.com/multigenderhebrew

- (c) Link to an article in The New York Times about Hebrew and gender (English), mentioning Multi-Gender Hebrew and including an interview with creator & designer of Multi-Gender Hebrew, Michal Shomer: www.nytimes.com/2022/08/01/world/middleeast/israel-hebrew-gender.html
- (d) Examples of Multi-Gender Hebrew in use, page 2
- (e) The phrase "Welcome" written in Multi-Gender Hebrew, page 3
- (f) Signage in Israel of the phrase "Welcome" written in Multi-Gender Hebrew, page 4

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(d) Examples of Multi-Gender Hebrew in use (font Alef Multi-Gender)

עברית רב־מגדרית Multi-Gender Hebrew

מערכת של אותיות עבריות חדשות, המאפשרות קריאה וכתיבה רב־מגדריות. העברית הרב־מגדרית מנכיחה את הנשים בשפה העברית ויוצרת מרחב למי שזהותם המגדרית אינה בינארית.

האם אנחנו נמצאית במקום שבו אנחנו צריכית להיות?

משני צדי המתרס עומדות מי שסבורות ששפה יוצרת מציאות ושהאופי המגדרי של העברית מסמן את האישה כאחרת ויוצר היררכיה, ומולק — שומרות הסף, בהם שמרנות למיניהם, וכן מי שמלגלגות על הסרבול שיוצרים ניסיונות השינוי.

?האם אתה רואה אותי? האם אתה פונה אליי? האם אתה מסתכלת עליי? האם אני נמצאת?

אַנִי נוֹכחֹת.

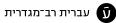
בָּל האֹנְשִׁים

מי היא שיתחליט בורכת בשבילי מי אני.

העברית יוצרת הבחנה ברורה על פי מין בחלקי הדיבור השונים. היא שותפה לתהליך ייחוס המגדר ומכריזה באופן שאינו משתמע לשתי פנים כיצד נתפס מגדרו של הנמענת בעיני הדוברת.

קָה אַתֹּה חוֹשׁבֹּץ?

"...לבקש מאנשים לא־בינארות לבחור לעצמק בינוי גוף שלא מגדיר אותם כראוי – זה לא משהו שאני ממליצה עליו".



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(e) The phrase "Welcome" written in Multi-Gender Hebrew (font Alef Multi-Gender)



ברוכים הבאים

Welcome (feminine)

Welcome (masculine)

ברוכות הבאות

Welcome (Multi-Gender)

תֵם סופית **ה** Final Tem

יוּוָ **ז** Yuv

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(f) Signage in Israel of the phrase "Welcome" written in Multi-Gender Hebrew



Technion - Israel Institute of Technology, Haifa



Gezer Regional Council, Municipality Building, Main Entrance



The Ben-Gurion Heritage Institute



Shoham, at the Town's Entrance



Ness Ziona, City Hall



"Partner" Company



Knesset (Parliament of Israel), the Committee on the Status of Women and Gender Equality