

## Who or What is "Yehuda HaYamit" of Jaffa?

Jaffa was the subject of numerous writings and songs. One can have great food of many flavors and tastes in Jaffa. Much has been written about the coins and medals of Jaffa and even about Yehuda HaYamit (*Judaea Navalis*), so here is a little more – but none of it is new.



### ***A selection of Street Signs along Yehuda HaYamit Street, Jaffa***

The naval battle between the Romans and the Jews is commemorated in the name of the street, based on a reworked, altered coin.

Zev Vilnay suggested the name for this street as it is always good to remember history, even when you lose. A street sign constitutes a historic document not just about its actual contents, but also about whatever it fails to state.

I have a warm and sweet corner in my heart for Jaffa, probably owing to the fact that my parents and eldest sister Devorah arrived in Jaffa after spending time at the detention camps in Cyprus. My sister Erella was born in Jaffa and the Jebelliyah – Giveat-Aliyah neighborhood became a part of a chapter in our family history that lasted about five years.

When I grew up, my father used to take me to the house where they had lived and tell me a little about their past experiences. He also took me to the police station where he had served as an ordinary constable. I also remember very vividly the red, professional running shoes by Puma, with the spikes, that we bought at the sports shop on Yerushalayim Boulevard, for the training sessions with coach Spinka at the Maccabiah stadium. It may have been the shop of goalkeeper Herzl Kabilyo, but I am not sure. Bloomfield stadium, too, is a part of my Jaffa heart, as well as the garage of good old devoted Zvika Melamed – and everything is located within the vicinity of Yehuda HaYamit Street. After all, the commercial heart of urban Jaffa is a fairly restricted area.

Devorah, my eldest sister, remembers people, families and events from Jaffa. The house in Jaffa where our family lived still stands, although it has been altered over the years, naturally. The vicinity is currently undergoing beautiful development and the area of the French consulate is very special. The Peres Center for Peace & Innovation stands there in a kind of expectation. The Jaffa slope turned out beautiful. I cannot explain it, but I do not feel like living in Jaffa, all of the special upgrades notwithstanding. Street No.3888 looks OK to me and we may return to it one day. Tzur Shezaf<sup>1</sup> fits in there, in Jaffa, much better than I do, and it is a fact that during the lectures of Professor Ora Negbi, back in the day, he managed to fit in beautifully. His website is great and, quite naturally, there is something there about Jaffa (<http://shezaf.net/english/>).

### **The Coins of Jaffa – Not Today!**

The ancient coins of Jaffa deserve a separate chapter. Most of them are definitely rare and the inventory available is not substantial. I promise to return to the subject of the various generations of Jaffa coins and even discuss the special token of the Jerusalem Hotel in Jaffa of the Templars and the American Colony – for the benefit of those interested in the subject. Today it will not happen, however, as we all converge on Yehuda HaYamit and very few people actually know why Yehuda and where HaYamit came from. I spent a lot of time walking around that area recently, and even asked the hasty passers-by about that Yehuda, and no one knew, and frankly – justifiably. Nowhere along the street did I find any explanation, except a charming and fairly old metal sign with blue enamel finish that survived on house No.14. A little more than a year has passed, and that sign disappeared.

### **Real-Estate Potential, Bulgarian Food, Hummus & Municipal Impotence**

Yehuda HaYamit Street is, as senior real-estate consultants say, a street with potential. As far as I am concerned, real-estate consultants belong in a category of impotence in the urban sense. They always speak in millions, only to be able to count some cash for the neighborhood grocery store at the end of the day. They better advise the Jewish inhabitants of France to buy property in Jaffa. As far as I am concerned, it would be better for some of those Frenchmen to concentrate in Jaffa and let go a little of Ben-Yehuda Street. Read on and you will realize that it is hard to rely on Frenchmen from

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<sup>1</sup> **Tzur Shezaf** (born 1959 in Jerusalem) is an Israeli travel book writer, journalist and novelist ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tzur\\_Shezaf](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tzur_Shezaf)).

France, and I naturally refer to non-Jewish Frenchmen and definitely not to north-African (Moroccan) French Jews.

With a lot of luck and money, Yehuda HaYamit Street can become a kind of Shenkin Street<sup>2</sup> and even more than that.

### **The Numbers of the Streets in Jaffa start from Bloomfield Stadium & End by the Sea**

Yehuda HaYamit Street starts at Aza Street, right near Yerushalayim Boulevard and Ben-Zvi Road, and ends with about a hundred house numbers near the port of Jaffa. Where the street starts there is a concentration of wonderful Bulgarian restaurants that are fairly inexpensive by my standards. Abu-Hassan – Ali Karwan of the famous Hummus restaurant is also there, at the corner of Shivtey Israel Street, in a more spacious and less noisy and stressful place than the one they had on HaDolphin Street. I noticed that the smaller numbers do not start near the sea, as they do in Tel-Aviv. The Arab mind, once again, works just the opposite to ours, as you may have forgotten, but Jaffa was once independent and not attached to Tel-Aviv in any way. Subsequently, Tel-Aviv would embrace and even "annex" Jaffa. It was Tel-Aviv Mayor Shlomo "Cheech" Lahat who was always very strict about the uncompromising connection of Tel-Aviv and Jaffa as a single verbal and municipal entity. What is the actual situation on the ground?

### **Impressive Houses, Ironwork, Mosaic, Locust, Horses & a Bridge with Graffiti**

Just recently, a large, new clothing store opened there, offering unbeatable prices, not far from Galei Tzahal (the IDF radio station), whose location is not a military secret. Further up the road you will find the mosaic house and there was even a pharmacy, long ago, which evolved into a shop for organic foods, as the owners became fed up with the burglars who needed a regular supply of painkillers. Incidentally, can anyone explain to me why there are so many Arab pharmacists, most of whom are Christian? I am being corrected – not most but all of them are Christian. I am being corrected again – there is at least one Muslim Arab among them. If you enter the side streets, just a little, there is a chance that right near the housing projects you will find horses grazing on fresh grass here and there. I saw at least two yesterday.

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<sup>2</sup> A commercial street in central Tel-Aviv that evolved into a chic tourist attraction following an extensive renovation project that was completed in 2012.

Along Yehuda HaYamit Street there are some impressive and interesting buildings from the past, some of which accommodate government offices and storage facilities. There are special ironwork creations as well. The street sign I had photographed a year ago (which has since then disappeared) was an indication of an emergency storage facility for fighting locust attacks that might arrive at some point, and do not be so complacent. Also, do not tell me, once again, that it is a cover for secret offices of the ISA (Israel Security Agency – SHABAK) or some other fairy tales. Life in Jaffa is truly stronger than any screenplay. Interestingly – why are there always noisy joyrides and border police presence in Jaffa?

There are not many streets in Israel over which there are bridges with vehicle traffic. If you visit Yehuda HaYamit Street, you will be able to roll down from Yefet Street into Yerushalayim Boulevard or in the opposite direction – toward the sea and the port that received a very nice facelift.

### **The Blue Metal Street Sign from the Past at 14, Yehuda HaYamit Street**

This street sign merits a separate article. Until yesterday I thought it was trivial information but when I arrived for another visit today – January 10, 2013 – I realized that the blue metal street sign from the past, which you can see as part of the top photograph, has been removed and is no longer there. The good old blue enamel street sign is no more, and we are lucky to have a photograph, as the sign is nice and explains the name of the street. Today you cannot find any explanation of the name Yehuda HaYamit anywhere along the street.

The blue metal street sign from the past (in the top photograph, right hand side) says: "Yehuda HaYamit Street, the name of the special coin the Romans issued in memory of their victory over the rebellious Jewish fleet" and in English – Rehov Yehuda HaYamit. In my opinion, that sign says a lot, on numerous matters. It is an important historical document about our past and about us in general, and I will explain as best as I can.

Please note that our street sign contains no Arabic text whatsoever, as perhaps the Arabs of those days could not read or perhaps no one paid attention to them back then, just like today's youngsters say, in their contemporary slang "I do not count you at all." The Hebrew Nikud (vocalization) has two "Patakh" notations in the word HaYamit, as opposed to "Patakh – Kamatz" in the new street signs. As I had never quite mastered the subject of Nikud, I will appreciate it if anyone can help and tell me which one is correct. Thanks for those who are particular about grammar generally and Nikud in

particular. Incidentally, I have not encountered the term "Yamiyah" (navy, fleet) in a long time. Who remembers "Ken HaYamiyah"<sup>3</sup> on Nordau Boulevard, close to Gan Ha'Atzma'ut (Independence Park), where the Grand Beach (affectionately referred to as "Grand Bitch") hotel currently stands? The English lettering on the sign indicates that the spelling of the word Rehov (= street) reflects the Hebrew pronunciation of that word. Naturally, all of the above is relevant to the time when the street sign was posted. Who knows when that was, exactly?

### **Where is the Street Sign from the Past?**

A street sign like this one, which survived and has never been replaced, and managed to escape pilfering, should be in a museum. It should receive pride of place at the Kadman Numismatic Pavilion, and if Mrs. Cecilia Meir (curator of the Eretz-Israel Museum) should not be interested in it – at the Old Jaffa Museum of Antiquities at Kikar Kedumim, and if not even there – I will be willing to take it, and will even pay for it. Is it true that the old sheet metal street signs from the past, being sold at the antiques markets, come from the stores of the municipality, legitimately, as some sellers told me? This issue merits an inquiry and in any case, my opinion is that such signs should rather be in the hands of collectors and nostalgia aficionados than collect dust and mites in storage. Today, as I said, my friends – the sign is no longer there.

### **Yehuda HaYamit from the Tel-Aviv Street Guide – Written & Edited by Yehiam Padan:**

"The inscription on an ancient coin issued by the Roman Empire on the occasion of the victory of its ships over the fleet of the Kingdom of Judaea near the end of the Second Temple era, 70 CE. In a fierce naval battle near Jaffa, the ships of the Kingdom of Judaea were sunk and the Romans – who regarded it as a great victory – issued this coin. Yosef Ben Matityahu (Josephus Flavius) reported that 4,200 bodies of Jewish warriors who had drowned washed ashore. Additionally, the Romans killed anyone who managed to swim ashore (*Antiquities of the Jews* 3, 9). In the past this street had been named in honor of Faisal I, King of Iraq, brother of Abdullah I, King of Jordan." Thanks to Yehiam Padan.

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<sup>3</sup> A local branch of a maritime youth movement that existed through the early 1960s.

### **J'Accuse...! – Not by Émile Zola**

Yehuda HaYamit Street received its name from a one-off coin kept at a museum in France since 1836. No identical or similar coins were found anywhere else. Professor Yakov Meshorer wrote about this coin in detail in his wonderful book "The Third Side of the Coin", in the chapter devoted to forgeries, pages 116 through 120. His conclusion is as follows: "The forger took a worn-out coin with a similar description and the inscription *Judaea Capta* (Captive Judaea) and changed it to *Judaea Navalis*, in Latin". The photograph in the center depicts an addition by Eliezer Morav alongside the photograph on the right with the original inscription on an original coin. The illustration depicts the "allegedly real" coin kept in France.

### **Matan Vilnay's Father**

Zev Vilnay (1900-1988), a researcher of Eretz Israel and its antiquities, historian and geographer and also the father of Matan, an IDF major general and former Israeli Ambassador to China, was the one who suggested the name Yehuda HaYamit. In his Guide to Eretz Israel, which was very common back in the 1940s and 1950s, he included an illustration of the coin alongside a history of the Jews of Jaffa.

### **Just another Fake Item – a Fabricated Antique**

Today it is almost certain that no such authentic coin ever existed. Our coin of Yehuda HaYamit, the one kept in France, is a fabrication – a coin fabricated by a person over another coin, in which the inscription was altered intentionally. The late Professor Meshorer determined that fact in these parts and wrote about it expressly. In France, they thought so as far back as 1872. Apparently, Vilnay was not in touch with the French when he suggested that King Faisal I Street be renamed Yehuda HaYamit Street. I think it is a wonderful name nevertheless, even if no such coin exists. I do not think everything in the present life must be real and authentic. Just recently, Yossi Shaham informed me that the court in Jerusalem made a ruling on the issue. Apparently, it is alright to forge and fabricate antiquities, but it is forbidden to be caught. It is rather strange that we are back in Jaffa and with the matter of fake antiquities.





**Old Sign of the Locust Fighting Unit (Ministry of Agriculture) Emergency Storage Facility**



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