Eliezer Yitzchak Perlman (later Eliezer Ben-Yehuda) was born in Luzhki, Lithuania. He attended a Jewish elementary school where he studied Hebrew and Tanach from the age of three. Ben-Yehuda’s father, a Chabad Chasid, died when Eliezer was five years old. At the age of 13, he was sent to his uncle to attend the yeshiva in Polotsk. The head of the yeshiva, a maskil in secret, introduced him to secular literature. To save him from heresy, his uncle sent him to study in Glubokoye, in the Vilna district, where Ben-Yehuda made the acquaintance of Samuel Naphtali Herz Jonas, also a Chabad Chasid, who was writing for Hebrew periodicals. Jonas persuaded him to prepare for secondary school matriculation, and his eldest daughter, Deborah, taught him Russian. After a year of preparation, he entered the Dvinsk Gymnasium, from which he graduated in 1877.

The Russo-Turkish War (1877–78) and the struggle of the Balkan nations for liberation planted in Ben-Yehuda the idea of the revival of the Jewish people on its ancestral soil. He maintained that the Jewish people, like all other peoples, had a historic land and a historic language. What was needed was to actuate a national movement that would restore Israel to its land and to its language. He wrote in the preface to his dictionary: “In those days, it was as if the heavens had suddenly opened, and a clear, incandescent light flashed before my eyes, and a mighty inner voice sounded in my ears: the renascence of Israel on its ancestral soil.”

Eliezer Yitzchak Perlman (later Eliezer Ben-Yehuda) was born in Luzhki, Lithuania. He attended a Jewish elementary school where he studied Hebrew and Tanach from the age of three. Ben-Yehuda’s father, a Chabad Chasid, died when Eliezer was five years old. At the age of 13, he was sent to his uncle to attend the yeshiva in Polotsk. The head of the yeshiva, a maskil in secret, introduced him to secular literature. To save him from heresy, his uncle sent him to study in Glubokoye, in the Vilna district, where Ben-Yehuda made the acquaintance of Samuel Naphtali Herz Jonas, also a Chabad Chasid, who was writing for Hebrew periodicals. Jonas persuaded him to prepare for secondary school matriculation, and his eldest daughter, Deborah, taught him Russian. After a year of preparation, he entered the Dvinsk Gymnasium, from which he graduated in 1877.

The Russo-Turkish War (1877–78) and the struggle of the Balkan nations for liberation planted in Ben-Yehuda the idea of the revival of the Jewish people on its ancestral soil. He maintained that the Jewish people, like all other peoples, had a historic land and a historic language. What was needed was to actuate a national movement that would restore Israel to its land and to its language. He wrote in the preface to his dictionary: “In those days, it was as if the heavens had suddenly opened, and a clear, incandescent light flashed before my eyes, and a mighty inner voice sounded in my ears: the renascence of Israel on its ancestral soil.”

Eliezer Yitzchak Perlman (later Eliezer Ben-Yehuda) was born in Luzhki, Lithuania. He attended a Jewish elementary school where he studied Hebrew and Tanach from the age of three. Ben-Yehuda’s father, a Chabad Chasid, died when Eliezer was five years old. At the age of 13, he was sent to his uncle to attend the yeshiva in Polotsk. The head of the yeshiva, a maskil in secret, introduced him to secular literature. To save him from heresy, his uncle sent him to study in Glubokoye, in the Vilna district, where Ben-Yehuda made the acquaintance of Samuel Naphtali Herz Jonas, also a Chabad Chasid, who was writing for Hebrew periodicals. Jonas persuaded him to prepare for secondary school matriculation, and his eldest daughter, Deborah, taught him Russian. After a year of preparation, he entered the Dvinsk Gymnasium, from which he graduated in 1877.

The Russo-Turkish War (1877–78) and the struggle of the Balkan nations for liberation planted in Ben-Yehuda the idea of the revival of the Jewish people on its ancestral soil. He maintained that the Jewish people, like all other peoples, had a historic land and a historic language. What was needed was to actuate a national movement that would restore Israel to its land and to its language. He wrote in the preface to his dictionary: “In those days, it was as if the heavens had suddenly opened, and a clear, incandescent light flashed before my eyes, and a mighty inner voice sounded in my ears: the renascence of Israel on its ancestral soil.”