

Amharic the Ancient Language of Ethiopia

Amharic (አማርኛ *amarāñña*) is a Semitic language mainly spoken in North Central Ethiopia by the Amharas and other ethnic groups. There are two clear meanings of Amhara both in geez and Amharic language itself:

- In Geez "Amhara" stands for "am" people, and "hara" independent, and translates into "Free People" or "citizens of the Ethiopian State of Right". It is the designation of Ethiopian citizens since the reign of Emperor Mnilk Ist (Xth century B.C.) when Ethiopia was reconstituted as a State of Right.
- In Amharic language itself "Amara" or "Amare" means gorgeous or beautiful.

After the destruction of the Ethiopian capital Axum and the devastation of a significant part of the country, brought upon by the anti-Christian rebel, Yodit (also known as "Gudit" or "the monstress"), in the IXth century A.D., there followed a southward shift of the Amharas (Solomonic Dynasty) with their language, political, and cultural heritage. By the XIth century, during the Zagwé dynasty, Amharic, the language of the Free People, was already the national language of Ethiopia. Today, all Ethiopians in big cities and towns speak this language. Figures vary between researchers; however, many feel that it has about 57 million speakers.

Amharic is the second most-spoken Semitic language in the world, after Arabic, and the official working language of the Ethiopian government. Thus, it has official status and is used nationwide. It has been the working language of government, the military, and of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church throughout medieval and modern times. Outside Ethiopia, Amharic is the language of some 4.7 million emigrants (notably in Egypt, America, Israel, and Sweden). In recent years the number of Amharic speaking population has increased in England and other European countries considerably. Amharic is written with its own script (a version of the Ge'ez script) known as **ፊደል** (Fidel). **Ge'ez**, the classical language which is still used as a liturgical language by Christians and the Beta Israel Jewish community of Ethiopia

ሀ ለ ሐ መ ሠ ረ ሰ ሸ ቀ ቁ ቢ ተ ቸ ኀ ነ ኘ አ
h l ḥ m ሰ r s ሰ q qu b t ሸ ḥ ሐ n ሸ '

[h] [l] [h] [m] [s] [r] [s] [ʃ] [k'] [kʷ] [b] [t] [ʃ] [h] [hʷ] [n] [p] [ʔ]

ከ ኸ ወ ዐ ዘ ዠ የ ደ ጀ ገ ጉ ጠ ጫ እ ጸ ፀ ፈ ፐ

k h w ' z ž y d ḡ g gu t ሸ p s z f p

[k] [h] [w] [ʔ] [z] [ʒ] [j] [d] [ɕ] [g] [gʷ] [t] [ʃ] [p'] [ts] [ts] [f] [p] *Amharic/Geez scripts*

In 2008 an Ethiopian holiday maker and researcher called Kefale Alemu has identified Amharic scripts in Fez (Morocco). This has indicated that Amharic language was used in the 12th and 13 centuries in North Africa and the Middle East. Some writers also believe that Aramaic, the other oldest language in which Jesus was speaking is associated with Amharic and other Semitic languages.