

LEARNING MADE EASY



2nd Edition

Hebrew

for
dummies[®]
A Wiley Brand



Learn to read,
write, and speak Hebrew

Understand a beautiful language,
both ancient and modern

Converse with family, plan
for travel, and more!

Jill Suzanne Jacobs, M.A.

Got a C in college Hebrew; undaunted,
became fluent two years later



Hebrew

2nd Edition

by Jill Suzanne Jacobs, M.A.

for
dummies[®]
A Wiley Brand

Hebrew For Dummies[®], 2nd Edition

Published by: **John Wiley & Sons, Inc.**, 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030-5774, www.wiley.com

Copyright © 2022 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Hoboken, New Jersey

Published simultaneously in Canada

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning or otherwise, except as permitted under Sections 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act, without the prior written permission of the Publisher. Requests to the Publisher for permission should be addressed to the Permissions Department, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030, (201) 748-6011, fax (201) 748-6008, or online at <http://www.wiley.com/go/permissions>.

Trademarks: Wiley, For Dummies, the Dummies Man logo, Dummies.com, Making Everything Easier, and related trade dress are trademarks or registered trademarks of John Wiley & Sons, Inc. and may not be used without written permission. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. John Wiley & Sons, Inc. is not associated with any product or vendor mentioned in this book.

LIMIT OF LIABILITY/DISCLAIMER OF WARRANTY: WHILE THE PUBLISHER AND AUTHORS HAVE USED THEIR BEST EFFORTS IN PREPARING THIS WORK, THEY MAKE NO REPRESENTATIONS OR WARRANTIES WITH RESPECT TO THE ACCURACY OR COMPLETENESS OF THE CONTENTS OF THIS WORK AND SPECIFICALLY DISCLAIM ALL WARRANTIES, INCLUDING WITHOUT LIMITATION ANY IMPLIED WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE. NO WARRANTY MAY BE CREATED OR EXTENDED BY SALES REPRESENTATIVES, WRITTEN SALES MATERIALS OR PROMOTIONAL STATEMENTS FOR THIS WORK. THE FACT THAT AN ORGANIZATION, WEBSITE, OR PRODUCT IS REFERRED TO IN THIS WORK AS A CITATION AND/OR POTENTIAL SOURCE OF FURTHER INFORMATION DOES NOT MEAN THAT THE PUBLISHER AND AUTHORS ENDORSE THE INFORMATION OR SERVICES THE ORGANIZATION, WEBSITE, OR PRODUCT MAY PROVIDE OR RECOMMENDATIONS IT MAY MAKE. THIS WORK IS SOLD WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT THE PUBLISHER IS NOT ENGAGED IN RENDERING PROFESSIONAL SERVICES. THE ADVICE AND STRATEGIES CONTAINED HEREIN MAY NOT BE SUITABLE FOR YOUR SITUATION. YOU SHOULD CONSULT WITH A SPECIALIST WHERE APPROPRIATE. FURTHER, READERS SHOULD BE AWARE THAT WEBSITES LISTED IN THIS WORK MAY HAVE CHANGED OR DISAPPEARED BETWEEN WHEN THIS WORK WAS WRITTEN AND WHEN IT IS READ. NEITHER THE PUBLISHER NOR AUTHORS SHALL BE LIABLE FOR ANY LOSS OF PROFIT OR ANY OTHER COMMERCIAL DAMAGES, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO SPECIAL, INCIDENTAL, CONSEQUENTIAL, OR OTHER DAMAGES.

For general information on our other products and services, please contact our Customer Care Department within the U.S. at 877-762-2974, outside the U.S. at 317-572-3993, or fax 317-572-4002. For technical support, please visit <https://hub.wiley.com/community/support/dummies>.

Wiley publishes in a variety of print and electronic formats and by print-on-demand. Some material included with standard print versions of this book may not be included in e-books or in print-on-demand. If this book refers to media such as a CD or DVD that is not included in the version you purchased, you may download this material at <http://booksupport.wiley.com>. For more information about Wiley products, visit www.wiley.com.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2022932609

ISBN: 978-1-119-86202-4 (pbk); 978-1-119-86203-1 (ebk); 978-1-119-86204-8 (ebk)

Contents at a Glance

Introduction	1
Part 1: Getting Started with Hebrew	7
CHAPTER 1: You Already Know Some Hebrew	9
CHAPTER 2: The Nitty-Gritty: Basic Hebrew Grammar	27
CHAPTER 3: Shalom, Shalom!: Meeting and Greeting	45
Part 2: Hebrew in Action	63
CHAPTER 4: Getting to Know You: Making Small Talk	65
CHAPTER 5: Eat! Eat! You're So Thin!	81
CHAPTER 6: Going Shopping	105
CHAPTER 7: Having Fun Hebrew Style	121
CHAPTER 8: Enjoying Your Free Time: Hobbies, Sports, and Other Fun Activities	141
CHAPTER 9: Talking on the Phone	157
CHAPTER 10: At the Office and Around the House	171
Part 3: Hebrew on the Go	189
CHAPTER 11: Planning and Taking a Trip	191
CHAPTER 12: Getting Around: Flying, Driving, and Riding	221
CHAPTER 13: Money, Money, Money	235
CHAPTER 14: Handling Emergencies	249
Part 4: Diving Deeper into Hebrew Life	265
CHAPTER 15: An Introduction to Israel	267
CHAPTER 16: War and Peace	279
Part 5: Sacred Hebrew	287
CHAPTER 17: Let's Get Biblical	289
CHAPTER 18: Like a Prayer	299
CHAPTER 19: Sacred Time, Sacred Space	315
Part 6: The Part of Tens	331
CHAPTER 20: Ten Books on Hebrew You Just Gotta Have	333
CHAPTER 21: Ten Favorite Hebrew Expressions	337
CHAPTER 22: Ten Great Israeli Phrases	341

Appendix A: Verb Tables	345
Appendix B: Hebrew-English Mini-Dictionary	355
Appendix C: Answer Key	377
Index	383

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	1
About This Book	1
Foolish Assumptions	2
How This Book Is Organized	3
Part 1: Getting Started	3
Part 2: Hebrew in Action	3
Part 3: Hebrew on the Go	4
Part 4: Israeli Life	4
Part 5: Sacred Hebrew	4
Part 6: The Part of Tens	4
Appendixes	4
Icons Used in This Book	5
Beyond the Book	5
Where to Go from Here	6
PART 1: GETTING STARTED WITH HEBREW	7
CHAPTER 1: You Already Know Some Hebrew	9
Taking Stock of What's Familiar	10
Speaking Hebrew Like a Native	12
Stressing out (not)	12
Getting out the gutturals	13
Opening your mouth to say "Ah!"	14
Counting in Hebrew	14
Counting objects	15
Counting higher	15
Recognizing Tips to Help You Read Hebrew	18
Figuring out the Hebrew alphabet's shapes, sounds, and stories	18
Reading and writing from right to left	23
CHAPTER 2: The Nitty-Gritty: Basic Hebrew Grammar	27
Making Sense of Hebrew Syntax	28
Putting your sentences in order	28
Questioning	29
Recognizing Parts of Speech	30
Naming nouns	30
Perfecting your pronouns	32

Applying adjectives	36
Pinpointing Hebrew verbs	37
Detecting adverbs	40
Spotting prepositions	41
Understanding Gender and Number	42
CHAPTER 3: Shalom, Shalom!: Meeting and Greeting	45
Greeting and Saying Goodbye	46
Greeting all day long	46
Replying to a greeting	47
Putting a name to a face	49
Making Grand Introductions	51
Introducing yourself	51
Introducing others	51
Getting Better Acquainted	54
Finding out who speaks English	54
Talking about where you come from	56
Chatting about how you feel	57
Extending and Responding to Invitations	58
Asking Questions: The Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How	59
Asking yes or no questions	60
Forming negative questions	60
PART 2: HEBREW IN ACTION	63
CHAPTER 4: Getting to Know You: Making Small Talk	65
Shootin' the Breeze	65
Talking About Yourself and Your Family	67
Chatting About the Weather	69
Six Days You Shall Labor: Talking About Work	73
Getting Addresses, Phone Numbers, Email, and Instagram/ Twitter handles	76
Asking and telling where you live	76
Asking and giving a phone number, email address, or Instagram handle	77
CHAPTER 5: Eat! Eat! You're So Thin!	81
Jewish Love Means Never Having to Say "I'm Hungry"	81
Quieting a growling stomach	83
Taming a wild thirst	83
Getting Down to Business: Food, Glorious Food!	84
Starting the day with breakfast	84
Enjoying lunch	86
Eating dinner	86
Raiding the refrigerator	87

	Going to Shabbat dinner	88
	Chefing it up at home	89
	Matching Adjectives and Nouns	90
	Taking Your Grocery List to the Market	95
	Going Out for a Bite	98
CHAPTER 6:	Going Shopping	105
	Exploring Places to Shop	105
	Selecting the Perfect Outfit	106
	Styling Your Clothes around the Seasons	111
	Fall fashion	111
	The winter look	111
	Spring attire	113
	Summer wear	113
	Sweatin' it out in the summer	113
	Color Me Beautiful.	117
	The Israeli Fashion Scene	117
	Getting More (and Less) Than You Bargained For	118
	Making comparisons.	118
	Speaking in hyperbole	119
CHAPTER 7:	Having Fun Hebrew Style	121
	Counting the Hours and Minutes	121
	Telling time like an American.	121
	Knowing the time of day.	123
	Relating time to the past, present, and future	123
	Discovering the Days in a Week	128
	Catching Some Culture	128
	Visiting museums and art galleries.	129
	Going to the movies	129
	Enjoying live entertainment: Music and theater	130
	The Israeli Music Scene.	135
	The Animals Went on the Ark Two by Two: Visiting the Zoo!	136
	Spicing Up Your Sentences with Adverbs	137
CHAPTER 8:	Enjoying Your Free Time: Hobbies, Sports, and Other Fun Activities	141
	Chatting About Your Hobbies	141
	Amassing an amazing collection	142
	Creating things with your hands	142
	Playing and Watching Sports	146
	Kickin' to score in soccer.	146
	Shooting for three in basketball	147
	Swinging away at baseball	147

	Taking a dip in the pool	149
	Working up a sweat playing other sports	149
	Venturing Outdoors for Some Fun	152
	Boogieing Till You Drop	153
CHAPTER 9:	Talking on the Phone	157
	Dialing Up the Basics	158
	Finding someone's number	158
	Telling someone to call you	158
	Socializing in fake time (also known as social media)	159
	Asking for People and Getting the Message	160
	Leaving a message	161
	Dealing with voicemail and other annoyances	163
	Making Arrangements over the Phone	165
	Talking About the Past: How Was Your Shabbat?	166
CHAPTER 10:	At the Office and Around the House	171
	Finding Your Way Around Your Job.	171
	Supplying your office	172
	Searching for the perfect job.	174
	Working from Home	178
	Hanging Out at Home.	180
	Looking through the rooms	180
	Furnishing your humble abode	181
	Residing in an Apartment.	183
	Hunting for your very own flat	183
	Giving your apartment some flair	185
	Keeping your apartment safe	185
	Commanding People: Do As I Say.	187
	PART 3: HEBREW ON THE GO	189
CHAPTER 11:	Planning and Taking a Trip	191
	Choosing Your Final Destination (And When You Want to Go).	191
	Whittling down your choices — so many places you can go!	192
	Finding your way around	194
	Packing	195
	Booking a trip.	196
	Traveling internationally.	196
	Coming and Going: Knowing Where You Are	197
	Discussing the Future: Verb Forms and Popular Expressions	199
	Finding the Hotel That's Right for You	200
	Making your reservations.	201
	Asking about the price	203
	Checking In: Names, Addresses and Room Numbers	204

	Filling out the registration form	204
	Settling into your room.	206
	Checking Out and Paying the Bill	207
	Asking for your bill.	207
	Asking about special charges.	208
	Leaving the hotel.	208
	Staying at an Airbnb	211
	Making Sure You Don't Get Lost	212
	Giving and Understanding Directions For Lost Souls.	215
	Keeping North, South, East, and West Straight.	218
CHAPTER 12:	Getting Around: Flying, Driving, and Riding	221
	Getting Through the Airport	221
	Checking in	222
	Suffering through the flight	223
	Getting your feet back on the ground	223
	Renting a Vehicle and a Phone to Go with It	224
	Renting a car	225
	Understanding the rental contract	226
	Navigating Public Transportation	228
	Traveling by taxi.	229
	Watching the wheels on the bus go round and round	229
	Traveling on trains and the light rail.	230
	Reading maps and schedules	232
	Being Early or Late.	233
CHAPTER 13:	Money, Money, Money	235
	Going to the Bank	235
	Talking to tellers.	235
	Counting your change.	236
	Changing Money	240
	Flowing with the Currency	242
	Using Credit Cards.	243
	Using Electronic and Digital Currency	243
	Directing Your Objects	243
CHAPTER 14:	Handling Emergencies	249
	Tackling Your Uncooperative Car	249
	Doctor, Doctor, Give Me the News	253
	The knee bone's connected to the leg bone: Identifying your body parts	253
	Describing your symptoms	254
	Explaining your unique medical needs	255
	Receiving a thorough examination.	255

	Paying attention to the diagnosis	256
	Going to the pharmacy	258
	Getting Help After You've Been Robbed	260
PART 4: DIVING DEEPER INTO HEBREW LIFE		265
CHAPTER 15:	An Introduction to Israel	267
	Discovering Multicultural Israel	267
	Touring Israeli Cities and Towns	269
	Starting at the Beginning: A Brief History Lesson	271
	Fleeing to and from Europe	274
	Wanting to be in charge: Nationalism, self-determination, and the Jewish State	274
CHAPTER 16:	War and Peace	279
	The Big Bang	279
	War	280
	Paths to Peace	282
	Environmental Cooperation May Be the Key	284
PART 5: SACRED HEBREW		287
CHAPTER 17:	Let's Get Biblical	289
	Figuring Out the Word Order in Biblical Hebrew	290
	Emphasizing When God Really Meant It	292
	Wishing, Intending, and Prohibiting	294
	Deciphering One-Word Wonders	295
	Counting Down the Greatest Biblical Hits	296
CHAPTER 18:	Like a Prayer	299
	Blessing: The Basics	299
	Deciphering the blessing formula	300
	Identifying some basic blessings	301
	Spiritually Speaking: Figuring Your Way around the Prayer Book	306
	The Sh'ma and her blessings	306
	Dissecting the Standing Prayer	310
	Concluding prayers	310
	Praying for peace	311
	Making Prayer Meaningful	313
CHAPTER 19:	Sacred Time, Sacred Space	315
	Going to a Synagogue	315
	Checking Out Holy Words for Holy Days	316
	Shabbat: The Sabbath	317
	Rosh HaShanah: The Jewish New Year	318

Yom Kippur: The Day of Atonement	318
Sukkot: The Fall Harvest Festival	319
Sh'mini Atzeret and Simchat Torah: Praying for Rain and Rejoicing in the Torah	319
Celebrating Sigd: The Holiday of Ethiopian Jews.	320
Ḥanukkah: The Jewish Festival of Lights.	321
HaHag shel HaHagim: The Festival of Festivals.	321
Tu BiShevat: The Birthday of the Trees	322
Purim: A Jewish Mardi Gras	322
Pesach: Passover	323
Yom HaShoah V'Ha'G'vurah: Holocaust Remembrance Day.	324
Yom HaZikaron: Israeli Memorial Day	324
Yom HaAtzma'ut: Israeli Independence Day	324
Lag B'Omer: The 33rd Day of the Omer	325
Shavuot: The Festival of Weeks	325
Tisha B'Av: The Ninth of Av.	325
Tu B'Av: The Holiday of Love	326
All My Life's a Circle: Jewish Life-Cycle Events	326
Brit/Simchat Bat: Welcome to the family.	327
B'nai Mitzvah: Coming of Age	327
Kiddushin: Sacred Partnership	327
Baruḥ Dayan HaEmet: End of Life	328

PART 6: THE PART OF TENS 331

CHAPTER 20: Ten Books on Hebrew You Just Gotta Have 333

Hebrew Roots. Jewish Routes: A Tribal Language in a Global World	333
Hebrew: The Eternal Language	334
The Tongue of the Prophets: The Life Story of Eliezer Ben Yehuda	334
The Hebrew Alphabet: A Mystical Journey.	334
Hebrew Talk: 101 Hebrew Roots And The Stories They Tell	334
Aleph-Bet Yoga: Embodying the Hebrew Letters for Physical and Spiritual Well-Being	335
The Word: The Dictionary that Reveals the Hebrew Source of English.	335
How the Hebrew Language Grew	335
The Story of Hebrew	335
Poems of Jerusalem and Love Poems	336

CHAPTER 21: Ten Favorite Hebrew Expressions 337

Mazal Tov	337
B'Karov Etzlehḥ	338
Titchadesh	338
B'Teavon	338

B'ezrat HaShem	339
Yishar Koahh.	339
Dash	339
Nu	340
Kol HaKavod.....	340
L'Haim.....	340
CHAPTER 22: Ten Great Israeli Phrases.....	341
Mah Pitom	341
Yesh G'vul L'Chol Ta'alul	341
Pa'am Shlishit Glidah.....	342
Im K'var, Az K'var	342
B'Shum Panim VaOfen Lo.....	342
Stam	343
Betahh.....	343
Haval Al HaZ'man.....	343
Hazak V'Amatz	343
Yehiyeh Tov	344
APPENDIX A: VERB TABLES	345
APPENDIX B: HEBREW-ENGLISH MINI-DICTIONARY	355
APPENDIX C: ANSWER KEY	377
INDEX	383

Introduction

Hebrew is an incredible language. If you're picking up this book, I'm guessing that you have at least a passing interest in the subject, which thrills me because I think that Hebrew is an amazing, fascinating, and beautiful language. It's the only language in the history of the world to go from a deep freeze to a fully thawed, living, spoken language again. When you speak Hebrew, you're part of that amazing linguistic history. Whether you're interested in Hebrew because you want to communicate with your Israeli cousins, want to brush up on the subject so you can understand prayers and other sacred Jewish literature better, or want to impress your Jewish in-laws, *Hebrew For Dummies* can help.

About This Book

This book is a great place to start regardless of your motivation for picking up or dusting off your Hebrew skills. It won't make you fluent overnight (though wouldn't that be nice?) or turn you into a Biblical scholar, but *Hebrew For Dummies* can give you a solid foundation in both conversational Hebrew and the Hebrew of prayer, sacred texts, and holidays. As if that's not enough, I also share with you my love of things Jewish and the delightful, sometimes quirky culture of the modern State of Israel, where the largest group of Hebrew speakers resides today. But if you aren't planning on taking a trip to the Middle East, don't worry: Hebrew is alive and well all over the world. You can find plenty of opportunities to practice your language skills. (If you're not sure where to turn, I have you covered with some tips on where you can find Hebrew speakers and Hebrew sources right here in North America.) **בְּרַחֲמֵי שָׁמַיִם!** (beh-hahtz-lah-**hah**; *Good luck! Much success to you!*)

This book is only the beginning — but I hope it's a good one! You can pick up a language only through exposure and repetition, so go online and listen to the audio files for this book again and again. Be sure to practice, practice, and (you knew it was coming) practice. Go to places where you hear Hebrew and speak Hebrew in your home and workplace. Teach your favorite Hebrew words and expressions to everyone you know. Before you know it, Hebrew will creep into your mind, soul, and heart, and you'll speak it day and night!

Here are a couple of conventions that I use in this book for your reading pleasure:

- » For this second edition, we're proud to include the Hebrew letters for each word (with vowels), along with the pronunciation (how to say the word) and translation (what the word means in English). In the pronunciations, the stressed syllables are italicized.
- » Because Hebrew language is often gender-specific (with masculine and feminine nouns, verb forms, and so on; see Chapter 2 for an explanation of gender), I've included the following abbreviations wherever necessary:
 - Masculine singular (MS)
 - Feminine singular (FS)
 - Nonbinary singular (NB)
 - Masculine plural (MP)
 - Feminine plural (FP)

To help you develop your language skills, *For Dummies* language books include

- » **Talkin' the Talk dialogues:** Here's where you get to see Hebrew in action. These relatively short, real-life dialogues use the vocabulary and grammatical concepts that I introduce in the book.
- » **Words to Know blackboards:** Here's where you can find the key words and phrases I introduce. It's all here: the word as it's written in Hebrew, the proh-nun-see-aye-shun, and the translation.
- » **Fun & Games activities:** I'm a teacher; I just can't help myself. So, at the end of each chapter, I include some fun little exercises to help reinforce your newly acquired Hebrew.

Foolish Assumptions

My father taught me never to assume anything. He even had a little ditty about assumptions that I won't repeat here. But my editor said that I had to come up with some assumptions about you, the reader. So here they are:

- » You know no Hebrew — or if you learned Hebrew in religious school, you don't remember a word of it.

- » You're not looking for a book that will make you fluent in Hebrew; you just want to know some words, phrases, and sentence constructions so that you can communicate basic information in Hebrew.
- » You don't want to have to memorize long lists of vocabulary words or a bunch of boring grammar rules.
- » You're inexplicably drawn to all yellow-and-black books.
- » You want to have fun and pick up some Hebrew at the same time.

Do any descriptions sound like you? Well, good. I bet you're in good company.

How This Book Is Organized

This book is organized into six parts plus an appendix. The six parts are broken down into chapters. I've organized the chapters around active topics — things you want to do (like go to a bank, go to a restaurant, or go to a synagogue). Each chapter gives you the lowdown on the Hebrew you need to know to get by while doing that activity. And, though I know that you don't want to be bogged down by grammar rules, I sneak a grammatical tidbit or two into each chapter. Don't worry: I make these brief excursions as quick and painless as possible.

Part 1: Getting Started

This part of the book starts with the basics. I introduce you to the Hebrew letters and vowels and give you some basic Hebrew vocabulary. I explain how I represent the Hebrew sounds in English letters (so you don't have to crack your teeth reading the Hebrew, although I encourage you to try). In Part 1, I also give you a basic grounding in Hebrew grammar.

Part 2: Hebrew in Action

Here's where I really get going. In these chapters, I give you basic Hebrew vocabulary to start using in your daily life — when you rise up, when you lie down, in your home, and when you walk (to quote from an important Hebrew prayer). Part 2 gives you the words to meet and greet, flirt and work, eat and drink, and shop 'til you drop. I also give you vocabulary to use when you go out for a night on the town and when you talk about it on the phone the next day. And I give you all the words you need when you're hanging out at home and cleaning up your place after you've made a mess.

Part 3: Hebrew on the Go

Here's where I start to get practical. I cover dealing with money, going to the bank, asking directions, getting around using various forms of transportation (funny thing — I don't mention camels; oh well), and hitting the road for a trip. So, if travel bug has paid you a visit, take a look at Part 3. I give you the words and phrases you need for planning the trip. And I also give you some vocabulary for handling — God forbid — an emergency.

Part 4: Israeli Life

When you travel to Israel or converse with Israelis about Israeli life, you'll need a specialized vocabulary. In these chapters, I've got you covered. You'll learn the names of some Israeli cities and towns, Israel's diverse religious, cultural and ethnic groups, and how to talk about Israel's history, conflicts and quest for peace. There's even a bit of Arabic in these chapters, too.

Part 5: Sacred Hebrew

Where would Hebrew be without Judaism? In this part, I present the sacred side of the Hebrew language. I tell you all about blessings, prayers, and Jewish holidays.

Part 6: The Part of Tens

What would a For Dummies book be without one of these? I'll put my top ten lists up against anyone's. In this section, I give you ten Israeli sayings so you can sound like a real צָבָר (*tzah-bahr*; native Israeli), plus the top-ten Hebrew sayings heard in the Jewish Diaspora (that's everywhere outside of the Land of Israel). I also give you a list of some great reads about the wonderful, wild, and wacky world of Hebrew. It's all here.

Appendixes

Here's all the nuts and bolts. The cogs that make Hebrew run — verb tables and a Hebrew-English/English-Hebrew dictionary. And it doesn't stop there. I put the answers to the Fun & Games activities (which you find at the end of each chapter) here too. This is the place to go when you want some information, and you want it fast.

Icons Used in This Book

Sometimes, I want to point out something that's especially important or interesting: a grammatical concept, something to remember, a tip to help you with your Hebrew skills, or a bit of insider insight into the wonderful world of Jewish culture. In these cases, I use the following icons, which you can find in the margins.



TIP

This icon accompanies helpful tips for picking up the Hebrew language.



REMEMBER

Think of this icon as that string around your finger that reminds you of all the little things you've gotta do but tend to forget. This icon flags important concepts that you have to keep in mind while you study Hebrew. You know what they say: God is in the details.



CULTURAL
WISDOM

This little guy is by far my favorite icon. When you see this icon, you know that I've taken the opportunity to cram in all sorts of interesting information about the Jewish world — religious and secular — in Israel and the Jewish Diaspora (lands outside Israel).



GRAMMATICALLY
SPEAKING

Ah, grammar. Can't live with it; can't live without it. This icon alerts you to instances where I point out the quirks of the Hebrew language and all those grammar rules that underlie the language's structure.



The website associated with this book gives you the opportunity to hear Hebrew in action. The site features audio files of native Hebrew speakers bringing to life some of the dialogues from the pages of this book. I bet you'll be amazed by how beautiful Hebrew can sound. Check it out at: www.dummies.com/go/hebrewfd2e.



TECHNICAL
STUFF

I really tried to make this foray into Hebrew as painless as possible for you, but every now and then, I felt the need to explain things in technical terms. Don't worry — you can skip the paragraphs marked with this icon and still get all the Hebrew you need for basic conversation.

Beyond the Book

In addition to what you're reading right now, this book comes with a free, access-anywhere Cheat Sheet containing tips and techniques for learning Hebrew faster. To get this Cheat Sheet, simply go to <https://www.dummies.com> and type **Hebrew For Dummies Cheat Sheet** in the search box.

Where to Go from Here

First, the good news: You don't have to read this entire book. In fact, you don't have to read any of it. (But if that's the case, you probably wouldn't have bought it.) Anyway, here's my point: This book is organized so that you can read only the chapters that interest you and skip the rest. At no point in the text do I assume that you've read any of my scintillating writing in other chapters or sections, and I won't get insulted if you want to read only certain chapters.

If you're interested in the religious stuff, by all means, go straight to chapters 17, 18, and 19. But if you're interested in the day-to-day stuff, or if you just want to know how to ask that cute Israeli out on a date, Chapter 3 may be your cup of tea. Take a look at the table of contents and turn to the chapter that most interests you. Go ahead and do it! Read this book out of order. Skip chapters. I won't tell anyone. In fact, I'll never know.

All right, all right, I do have to add a few exceptions to the read-anything-you-want rule. You'll probably want to read Chapter 1, which gives you an overview of the book. And if you're a grammar geek, you'll loooooove Chapter 2. If you aren't a grammar geek (most people despise the stuff, and I can't say that I blame them), you may want to look at Chapter 2 anyway. Here's a tip from someone who knows: After you understand the basics of Hebrew grammar, picking up the rest of the language is a cakewalk. So, consider checking out Chapter 2.

1

Getting Started with Hebrew

IN THIS PART . . .

See the links between Hebrew and English.

Master the basics of Hebrew grammar.

Say “Hello” — and “Goodbye”.

IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Identifying English-sounding words in Hebrew
- » Recalling Hebrew sayings and words
- » Figuring out English words that come from Hebrew
- » Counting in Hebrew
- » Eyeing the Hebrew alphabet

Chapter **1**

You Already Know Some Hebrew

! **בְּרוּךְ הַבָּיָא** (*Bah-rooh Hah-Bah!*; *Welcome to Hebrew!*) In studying Hebrew, you're joining millions of other Hebrew speakers around the world. Its two centers are ● Israel (of course) and North America, which is home to many Hebrew newspapers, Hebrew-speaking camps and schools, and institutions. You're also speaking the Bible's original language and one of the most ancient languages still spoken today. Furthermore, you're speaking the only language in the history of the world known to have undergone a revival, returning fully to being a spoken language after hundreds — perhaps even 2,000 — years of being relegated to correspondence, literature, and the sacred world of prayer and the Bible.

Hebrew was once almost exclusively a holy language — a language of prayers and ritual, of the Bible and other sacred texts, and a language above the humdrum of the everyday. That's no longer true. The same ancient and holy tongue is now the language of sunbathing on the beach, eating dinner, going to the doctor, and carrying out the myriad events of everyday life.

All languages are portals — openings to culture and friendship, literature, and ideas. Discover any one of these portals, and a whole new world opens up to you. Discover Hebrew, and a whole Jewish and Israeli world is yours.

Taking Stock of What's Familiar

If you've ever been to a synagogue or had a bit of Jewish education, you probably know a little Hebrew already. But even if you've never walked through a synagogue's door or studied anything Jewish, you probably still know some Hebrew words. You've probably heard the word *amen*, for example. That word is Hebrew! *Amen* comes from a word meaning "faith" or "belief," and people usually say it at the end of a prayer. And the word *Hallelujah*? Hebrew again! The word literally means "Praise God." Even the word *alphabet* derives from the Hebrew words for the first two letters of its alphabet, *aleph* and *bet*. (To see what the Hebrew alphabet looks like, check out "Recognizing Tips to Help You Read Hebrew" later in this chapter.)

You may have heard other Jewish words, of course, such as *שלעפ* (*shlehp*; to drag or pull) and *קְוֵהְטֵשׁ* (*kvehtsh*; to complain), which are actually Yiddish (the language of the Jews of Eastern Europe combining Old High German, Hebrew, and other languages) and are part of the Israeli vernacular today. You may never have thought about other words that have Hebrew roots. Did you know that *cinnamon* is a derivative of the Hebrew word *קַנְמוֹן* (*kee-nah-mohn*), which appears in the biblical book *The Song of Songs*? The English word *dilute* may derive from the Hebrew word *דָּל* (*dahl*), which means "weak" or "thin" and first appears in the biblical book of *Genesis*.

Some people claim that Hebrew is the mother of all languages. No matter what its history or origin, Hebrew, a language that has its origins in the Fertile Crescent, has crept into North American spoken English. This process works in reverse, too, as many English words and phrases have crept into the Hebrew language. Interestingly enough, although you as an English speaker may identify some words as English, some of them derive from Italian and French, which shows the universality of certain words. But if you say the following words with an Israeli accent, you're speaking Hebrew!

- » Hamburger
- » Macaroni
- » Pizza
- » Cafe
- » Radio
- » Internet
- » Telephone

Incidentally, The Academy for Hebrew Language, the institute responsible for creating Modern Hebrew words, created an authentic Hebrew word for the telephone. The academy called the telephone a שַׁח-רַחוּק (sahch-rah-chohk), which put together the words for *conversation* and *long distance*. So, *telephone* translated as “long-distance conversation.” Pretty clever, huh? This word didn’t stick with the Israeli public, however, so טֵלֶפּוֹן (*telephone*) it is.

INTRODUCING THE ACADEMY FOR HEBREW LANGUAGE

Hebrew, the language of the Bible, is spoken today in Israel and around the world as a modern language. The question, of course, is where all these modern words come from? Who decides? The answer is הַאֲקָדֵמְיָה לְלִשׁוֹן הָעִבְרִית (ha-ah-kah-dee-mee-yah la-lh-shon hah-eev-reett; The Academy for Hebrew Language), an institute founded in Israel in 1953 to oversee the language’s development and to create new words as the need arose in a manner consistent with Hebrew’s historical development. So, although Hebrew is an ancient biblical language, new words needed to be developed, such as *high tech* (תַּעֲשִׂיהָעֵלִית) tah-ah see-yat ee-leet) and *start-up company* (חֵבְרַת הַזְנָק; hehv-raht hehz-nehk), *surfboard* (גַּלְשָׁן; gahl-shan), *jet lag* (יַעֲפָת; yah-eh-feht), and even — when you’ve had a few too many — *hangover* (חִמְרֵמֶרֶת; hah-mahr-moh-reht).

Other timely words include נְיֻשִׁיּוּת (neh-shee-goot; *affordability*), חֵרִיגְנוּת (**h**ahr-ree-gahn-oot; *exceptionalism*), נְתוּנֵי עֵתָק (nee-too-nee ah-tahk; *big data*), תַּג הַקְּבֻצָּה (tahg-hahk -bahk-tzah; *hashtag*), הַעֲלֵמַת זְהוּת (heet-ahm-aht zah-hoot; *anonymization*), עֵילוּת (ee-loot; *gentrification*), אַחֻוּה (ah-vah; *solidarity*), and תַּעֲלוּם מִסָּךְ (**h**ah-tahz-loom **h** screen shot).

The Israeli public doesn’t accept all the words the academy invents, of course, although the academy’s decisions are binding for government documents and the official Israel Broadcasting Authority.

Israelis aren’t above taking matters into their own hands and creating words of their own. In the 1990s, Motorola Israel Corporation introduced wireless phones, coining the new word פֵּלָא-פּוֹן *pela-phone* (meaning “wonder phone.”) You can find out more about the academy at: <https://hebrew-academy.org.il/>. Here’s a great video on the Academy (it’s in Hebrew, but there are English subtitles); <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cY62gLh10CM> You can even check out their Facebook page and “like” it at www.facebook.com/AcademyOfTheHebrewLanguage.

Speaking Hebrew Like a Native

When speaking a foreign language, you want to sound as authentic as possible. Use the tips in the following sections to start. The most important parts of sounding like a native are persistence and practice — and then some more practice! Listen to the dialogues from this book (available online) as much as possible. Spend as much time listening to Hebrew spoken by native speakers as you can.

Memorizing vocabulary and certain stock phrases and repeating them to yourself until you can say them at quite a clip is also helpful. In no time at all, you may fool people into thinking that you speak Hebrew fluently — or close to fluently, anyway.

Stressing out (not)

The first tip I give you has to do with the way syllables are stressed. In American English, we often stress or place emphasis on the first syllable in each word, as in “When *speaking* a *foreign language*” But Hebrew often places the emphasis on the last syllable. So, if you were speaking that previous phrase with an Israeli accent, you’d place your emphasis on the last syllable: “When *speaking* a *foreign language*”

GESTURING LIKE THE BEST OF THEM

Gestures provide the flourishing touch to help you seem like a native speaker. Use the following gestures when you’re speaking in Israel:

- Holding one hand at about shoulder level with the palm upright and all the fingers cupped together in the center means ! רגע (reh-gah; *wait a minute*).
- When you want to catch a cab, point your index finger down at the ground, indicating that you want the cab to stop where you’re pointing.
- In Israel, the American thumbs-up sign has traditionally been seen as an unfriendly gesture that means you’re ברוך (broh-gehz; *mad or pissed off at someone*).

Interestingly, an ad campaign in Israel once encouraged kids to make a thumbs-up sign to drivers when they’re crossing the street, with the drivers returning the thumbs-up as an indication that they see the children and will let them cross without running them over. So, thumbs-up is taking on a positive connotation!

Getting out the gutturals

The second piece of advice I'll give you has to do with certain Hebrew letters that are pronounced at the back of the throat. Use these tips to pronounce them:

- » ץ (*eye-yeen*): This letter makes a barely audible guttural sound in the back of the throat. For practical purposes, this letter is nearly a silent syllable.
- » כ (*hahf*): This letter makes a sound you don't hear in English. It's a hard H sound, like the one you make when you clear your throat. In this book it is written as an **h**.
- » ח (*heht*): This letter makes a strong throaty H sound. In this book, this syllable is written as **h**.
- » ר (*raysh*): Traditionally this letter makes an R sound as in *round*. To sound like a native, roll this syllable like a Spanish R, and try to produce the sound from the back of your throat.

Find out about the rest of the Hebrew alphabet in “Recognizing Tips to Help You Read Hebrew” later in this chapter.



TECHNICAL
STUFF

A PEOPLE DISPERSED, A LANGUAGE INTACT

Hebrew served as the vernacular during the ancient Jewish commonwealth until it was conquered by the Romans in 70 CE (Common Era). Then Jews fanned out across the globe to Asia, Africa, and Europe. Even though they were dispersed, the Jewish people continued to practice their religion (Judaism) and remained literate in their language (Hebrew).

Hebrew continued to be the language of prayer, study, and correspondence for Jewish people. Gradually, Jews adopted the languages of their host countries as their spoken language. They mixed Hebrew with their host countries' languages, giving rise to new Jewish languages such as Ladino, Judeo-Arabic, and Yiddish.

In the 1800s, a movement began to revive Hebrew as a spoken language. Eliezer Ben-Yehuda championed the cause and moved to ארץ ישראל (*eh-rehtz yees-rah-ehl*; *the Land of Israel*) to revive Hebrew, writing the first Modern Hebrew dictionary. Today, Hebrew is one of the two official languages in Israel (Arabic being the other) and is a living, spoken language for millions of Israelis and other Hebrew speakers across the globe.

Opening your mouth to say “Ah!”

Third, watch the pronunciation of your vowels. When pronouncing the *ah* sound, pronounce that vowel fully. Open your mouth wide and say “Ah” as though you were at the doctor’s office. Hebrew doesn’t have a short *i* sound (like the vowel sound in *sit*), so any time you see an *i*, remember to make it a long sound, like the *ee* in *Whoopee!* In Hebrew, *oh* sounds are long, as in *over*.



REMEMBER

Hebrew is a Mediterranean language, and as such, it has a certain nasal quality. More so than in English — but actually a lot like in French — you use your nasal cavity when making sounds. Here’s a less-technical tip: When speaking Hebrew, try to fake a French accent. At the very least, your Hebrew will sound better than it does with an American accent!

Counting in Hebrew

Learning how to count is fundamental to the study of any language. Hebrew divides words into masculine and feminine genders (see Chapter 2), and numbers are no different; they have masculine and feminine forms. You may feel a little confused, but don’t worry! Table 1-1 gives you the *cardinal numbers* (the numbers you use for counting) from 1 to 10. When you want to count without counting objects, use the feminine form. See “Counting objects” later in this chapter to find out how to incorporate gender into numbers.

TABLE 1-1

Counting from 1 to 10

Number	Masculine	Feminine
1	אֶחָד (eh- <i>had</i>)	אֶחָת (ah- <i>hat</i>)
2	שְׁנַיִם (<i>shnah-eem</i>)	שְׁתַּיִם (<i>shta-yim</i>)
3	שְׁלוֹשָׁה (<i>shloh-sha</i>)	שְׁלוֹשׁ (<i>sha-lohsh</i>)
4	אַרְבָּעָה (<i>ahr-bah-ah</i>)	אַרְבַּע (<i>ahr-bah</i>)
5	חֲמִשָּׁה (hah-mee- <i>shah</i>)	חֲמִשׁ (hah-mesh)
6	שֵׁשׁ (<i>shee-shah</i>)	שֵׁשׁ (<i>shesh</i>)
7	שִׁבְעָה (<i>sheev-ah</i>)	שִׁבְעַת (<i>she-vah</i>)
8	שְׁמוֹנָה (<i>shmoh-nah</i>)	שְׁמוֹנֶה (<i>shmoh-neh</i>)
9	תֵּשַׁע (<i>teesh-ah</i>)	תֵּשַׁע (<i>tey-sha</i>)
10	עֶשְׂרֵה (<i>ah-sah-rah</i>)	עֶשְׂרֵי (<i>eh-sehr</i>)

Counting objects

The gender of the number you use when you want to count something depends on the gender of the noun you're counting. (Sound confusing? Don't worry. You can do it.) Counting objects in Hebrew is easy. Just remember to do the following things:

- » **Figure out the gender of the noun you're counting.** If you want to talk about one book, first you must figure out whether the noun *book* is masculine or feminine. (It's masculine.) So, when you count books, you need to use the masculine form of the number.
- » **Place the number appropriately before or after the noun.** For the number 1, you place the number after the noun. So rather than saying "one book," you say, "book one" (סֵפֶר אֶחָד; *seh-fehr eh-chad*). But after you get to the number two, place the number before the noun. In Hebrew, the plural of סֵפֶר is סֵפָרִים (*sfah-reem; books*). So, to say "two books," you say שְׁנַי סֵפָרִים (*shnay sfah-reem*); for "three books," say שְׁלוֹשָׁה סֵפָרִים (*shloh-shah sfah-reem*); for "four books," say אַרְבָּעָה סֵפָרִים (*ahr-bah-ah sfah-reem*); and so on.



TIP

The number 2 in Hebrew is an exception. When you're specifying two of something, say "two boys" (יְלָדִים; *yuh-lah-deem*) or "two girls" (יְלָדוֹת; *yuh-lah-doht*), and drop the last syllable (*im*) of the number 2. So, you get יְלָדִים (*two boys*) and שְׁנֵי יְלָדוֹת (*two girls*). Drop the *im* regardless of the noun you're counting.

Counting higher

To form the numbers 11–19, place the second number in front of the 10. In the masculine form, for example, 11 is אֶחָד עָשָׂר. In the feminine form, 11 is אַחַת עָשָׂרָה (*ah-chah es-reh*). Table 1-2 shows the numbers 11–19.



REMEMBER

Use the appropriate gender for the 10 and the additional number that makes up the compound number.

The multiples of ten (10, 20, 30, and so on) are easy because these numbers are gender-neutral. Table 1-3 shows the multiples of 10.

TABLE 1-2 Counting from 11 to 19

Number	Masculine	Feminine
11	אַחַד עָשָׂר (eh- h ad ah-sahr)	אַחַת עָשָׂר (ah- h ahht ehs-reh)
12	שְׁנַיִם עָשָׂר (shnehyim ah-sahr)	שְׁתַּיִם עָשָׂר (shtehyim ehs-reh)
13	שְׁלוֹשׁ עָשָׂר (shloh-sha ah-sahr)	שְׁלוֹשׁ עָשָׂר (shlosh-ehsreh)
14	אַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר (ahr-bah-ah ah-sahr)	אַרְבַּע עָשָׂר (ahr-bah es-reh)
15	חֲמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר (hah-mee-shah ah-sahr)	חֲמֵשׁ עָשָׂר (hah-mesh es-reh)
16	שֵׁשׁ עָשָׂר (shee-shah ah-sahr)	שֵׁשׁ עָשָׂר (shehsh ehs-reh)
17	שִׁבְעָה עָשָׂר (sheev-ah ah-sahr)	שִׁבַּע עָשָׂר (shvah es-reh)
18	שְׁמוֹנָה עָשָׂר (shmoh-nah ah-sahr)	שְׁמוֹנֵה עָשָׂר (shmoh-neh ehs-reh)
19	תְּשַׁע עָשָׂר (teesh-ah ah-sahr)	תְּשַׁע עָשָׂר (tshah-esreh)

TABLE 1-3 Counting Multiples of 10

Number	Hebrew	Pronunciation
20	עָשְׂרִים	ehs-reem
30	שְׁלוֹשִׁים	shloh-sheem
40	אַרְבָּעִים	ahr-bah-eem
50	חֲמִשִּׁים	hah-mee-sheem
60	שֵׁשִׁים	shee-sheem
70	שִׁבְעִים	sheev-eem
80	שְׁמוֹנִים	shmoh-neem
90	תְּשַׁעִים	teesh-eem

If you want to say something like “21” or “47,” however, you have to pay attention to gender again. (See Table 1-4.) The pattern for making these numbers is to state the number in the tens, such as עָשְׂרִים (ehs-reem; 20) and then add the word for *and* (וְ; *veh*), followed by the single number, such as אֶחָד (eh-chad; one). So, 21 would be עָשְׂרִים וְאֶחָד (ehs-reem veh-eh-chad).