

LEARNING MADE EASY



2nd Edition

# Hebrew

for  
**dummies**<sup>®</sup>  
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**<sup>®</sup>  
A Wiley Brand

## **Hebrew For Dummies®**, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition

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

<p>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</p>
--

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](http://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)

# Hebrew For Dummies®

To view this book's Cheat Sheet, simply go to [www.dummies.com](http://www.dummies.com) and search for “Hebrew For Dummies Cheat Sheet” in the Search box.

## Table of Contents

[Cover](#)

[Title Page](#)

[Copyright](#)

[Introduction](#)

[About This Book](#)

[Foolish Assumptions](#)

[How This Book Is Organized](#)

[Icons Used in This Book](#)

[Beyond the Book](#)

[Where to Go from Here](#)

[\*\*Part 1: Getting Started with Hebrew\*\*](#)

[\*\*Chapter 1: You Already Know Some Hebrew\*\*](#)

[Taking Stock of What's Familiar](#)

[Speaking Hebrew Like a Native](#)

[Counting in Hebrew](#)

[Recognizing Tips to Help You Read Hebrew](#)

[\*\*Chapter 2: The Nitty-Gritty: Basic Hebrew Grammar\*\*](#)

[Making Sense of Hebrew Syntax](#)

[Recognizing Parts of Speech](#)

[Understanding Gender and Number](#)

## **Chapter 3: Shalom, Shalom!: Meeting and Greeting**

[Greeting and Saying Goodbye](#)

[Making Grand Introductions](#)

[Getting Better Acquainted](#)

[Extending and Responding to Invitations](#)

[Asking Questions: The Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How](#)

## **Part 2: Hebrew in Action**

### **Chapter 4: Getting to Know You: Making Small Talk**

[Shootin' the Breeze](#)

[Talking About Yourself and Your Family](#)

[Chatting About the Weather](#)

[Six Days You Shall Labor: Talking About Work](#)

[Getting Addresses, Phone Numbers, Email, and Instagram/Twitter handles](#)

### **Chapter 5: Eat! Eat! You're So Thin!**

[Jewish Love Means Never Having to Say "I'm Hungry"](#)

[Getting Down to Business: Food, Glorious Food!](#)

[Matching Adjectives and Nouns](#)

[Taking Your Grocery List to the Market](#)

[Going Out for a Bite](#)

### **Chapter 6: Going Shopping**

[Exploring Places to Shop](#)

[Selecting the Perfect Outfit](#)

[Styling Your Clothes around the Seasons](#)

[Color Me Beautiful](#)

[The Israeli Fashion Scene](#)

[Getting More \(and Less\) Than You Bargained For](#)

## **Chapter 7: Having Fun Hebrew Style**

[Counting the Hours and Minutes](#)

[Discovering the Days in a Week](#)

[Catching Some Culture](#)

[The Israeli Music Scene](#)

[The Animals Went on the Ark Two by Two: Visiting the Zoo!](#)

[Spicing Up Your Sentences with Adverbs](#)

## **Chapter 8: Enjoying Your Free Time: Hobbies, Sports, and Other Fun Activities**

[Chatting About Your Hobbies](#)

[Playing and Watching Sports](#)

[Venturing Outdoors for Some Fun](#)

[Boogieing Till You Drop](#)

## **Chapter 9: Talking on the Phone**

[Dialing Up the Basics](#)

[Asking for People and Getting the Message](#)

[Making Arrangements over the Phone](#)

[Talking About the Past: How Was Your Shabbat?](#)

## **Chapter 10: At the Office and Around the House**

[Finding Your Way Around Your Job](#)

[Working from Home](#)

[Hanging Out at Home](#)

[Residing in an Apartment](#)

[Commanding People: Do As I Say](#)

## **Part 3: Hebrew on the Go**

### **Chapter 11: Planning and Taking a Trip**

[Choosing Your Final Destination \(And When You Want to Go\)](#)

[Coming and Going: Knowing Where You Are](#)

[Discussing the Future: Verb Forms and Popular Expressions](#)

[Finding the Hotel That's Right for You](#)



[Checking In: Names, Addresses and Room Numbers](#)

[Checking Out and Paying the Bill](#)

[Staying at an Airbnb](#)

[Making Sure You Don't Get Lost](#)

[Giving and Understanding Directions For Lost Souls](#)

[Keeping North, South, East, and West Straight](#)

## **Chapter 12: Getting Around: Flying, Driving, and Riding**

[Getting Through the Airport](#)

[Renting a Vehicle and a Phone to Go with It](#)

[Navigating Public Transportation](#)

[Being Early or Late](#)

## **Chapter 13: Money, Money, Money**

[Going to the Bank](#)

[Changing Money](#)

[Flowing with the Currency](#)

[Using Credit Cards](#)

[Using Electronic and Digital Currency](#)

[Directing Your Objects](#)

## **Chapter 14: Handling Emergencies**

[Tackling Your Uncooperative Car](#)

[Doctor, Doctor, Give Me the News](#)

[Getting Help After You've Been Robbed](#)

## **Part 4: Diving Deeper into Hebrew Life**

### **Chapter 15: An Introduction to Israel**

[Discovering Multicultural Israel](#)

[Touring Israeli Cities and Towns](#)

[Starting at the Beginning: A Brief History Lesson](#)

### **Chapter 16: War and Peace**

[The Big Bang](#)

[War](#)

[Paths to Peace](#)

[Environmental Cooperation May Be the Key](#)

## **Part 5: Sacred Hebrew**

### **Chapter 17: Let's Get Biblical**

[Figuring Out the Word Order in Biblical Hebrew](#)

[Emphasizing When God Really Meant It](#)

[Wishing, Intending, and Prohibiting](#)

[Deciphering One-Word Wonders](#)

[Counting Down the Greatest Biblical Hits](#)

### **Chapter 18: Like a Prayer**

[Blessing: The Basics](#)

[Spiritually Speaking: Figuring Your Way around the Prayer Book](#)

[Making Prayer Meaningful](#)

### **Chapter 19: Sacred Time, Sacred Space**

[Going to a Synagogue](#)

[Checking Out Holy Words for Holy Days](#)

[All My Life's a Circle: Jewish Life-Cycle Events](#)

## **Part 6: The Part of Tens**

### **Chapter 20: Ten Books on Hebrew You Just Gotta Have**

[Hebrew Roots. Jewish Routes: A Tribal Language in a Global World](#)

[Hebrew: The Eternal Language](#)

[The Tongue of the Prophets: The Life Story of Eliezer Ben Yehuda](#)

[The Hebrew Alphabet: A Mystical Journey](#)

[Hebrew Talk: 101 Hebrew Roots And The Stories They Tell](#)

[Aleph-Bet Yoga: Embodying the Hebrew Letters for Physical and Spiritual Well-Being](#)

[The Word: The Dictionary that Reveals the Hebrew Source of English](#)

[How the Hebrew Language Grew](#)

[The Story of Hebrew](#)

Poems of Jerusalem and Love Poems

## **Chapter 21: Ten Favorite Hebrew Expressions**

Mazal Tov

B'Karov Etzleh

Titchadesh

B'Teavon

B'Ezrat HaShem

Yishar Koah

Dash

Nu

Kol HaKavod

L'Haim

## **Chapter 22: Ten Great Israeli Phrases**

Mah Pitom

Yesh G'vul L'Chol Ta'alul

Pa'am Shlishit Glidah

Im K'var, Az K'var

B'Shum Panim VaOfen Lo

Stam

Betah

Haval Al HaZ'man

Hazak V'Amatz

Yehiyeh Tov

## **Appendix A: Verb Tables**

## **Appendix B: Hebrew-English Mini-Dictionary**

English-Hebrew Mini-Dictionary

## **Appendix C: Answer Key**

Chapter 1: You Already Know Some Hebrew

Chapter 2: The Nitty Gritty: Basic Hebrew Grammar

Chapter 3: Shalom, Shalom! Meeting and Greeting

Chapter 4: Getting to Know You: Making Small Talk

[Chapter 5: Eat! Eat! You're So Thin!](#)

[Chapter 6: Going Shopping](#)

[Chapter 7: Having Fun Hebrew Style](#)

[Chapter 8: Enjoying Your Free Time: Hobbies, Sports, and Other Fun Activities](#)

[Chapter 9: Talking on the Phone](#)

[Chapter 10: At the Office and Around the House](#)

[Chapter 11: Planning and Taking a Trip](#)

[Chapter 12: Getting Around: Flying, Driving, and Riding](#)

[Chapter 13: Money, Money, Money](#)

[Chapter 14: Handling Emergencies](#)

[Chapter 17: Let's Get Biblical](#)

[Chapter 18: Like a Prayer](#)

[Chapter 19: Sacred Time, Sacred Space](#)

## **Index**

## **About the Author**

## **Connect with Dummies**

## **End User License Agreement**

# List of Tables

## **Chapter 1**

[TABLE 1-1 Counting from 1 to 10](#)

[TABLE 1-2 Counting from 11 to 19](#)

[TABLE 1-3 Counting Multiples of 10](#)

[TABLE 1-4 Counting from 21 to 29](#)

[TABLE 1-5 The Hebrew Alphabet](#)

[TABLE 1-6 The Long Vowels](#)

[TABLE 1-7 The Short Vowels](#)

## **Chapter 2**

[TABLE 2-1 Identifying Some Common Nouns](#)

[TABLE 2-2 Personal Pronouns Used as Subjects](#)

[TABLE 2-3 Personal Pronouns Used as Objects](#)

[TABLE 2-4 Stand-Alone Possessive Pronouns](#)

[TABLE 2-5 Male and Female Pronominal Suffixes](#)

[TABLE 2-6 Nonbinary Pronominal Suffixes](#)

[TABLE 2-7 Exploring Some Common Adjectives](#)

[TABLE 2-8 Some Common Present-Tense Verbs](#)

[TABLE 2-9 Common Adverbs](#)

[TABLE 2-10 Hebrew Prepositions](#)

## **Chapter 3**

[TABLE 3-1 Words to Describe How You Feel](#)

## **Chapter 4**

[TABLE 4-1 All in the Family](#)

[TABLE 4-2 Calling in the Professionals](#)

## **Chapter 7**

[TABLE 7-1 Conjugating לָהֲקִיט \(...](#)

[TABLE 7-2 Animals You May See at a Zoo](#)

## **Chapter 8**

[TABLE 8-1 Common Soccer Terms](#)

[TABLE 8-2 Common Basketball Terms](#)

[TABLE 8-3 Common Baseball Terms](#)

[TABLE 8-4 Other Popular Sports](#)

[TABLE 8-5 Popular Outdoor Activities](#)

## **Chapter 9**

[TABLE 9-1 Verb Suffixes](#)

## **Chapter 11**

[TABLE 11-1 Rattling Off the Months](#)

[TABLE 11-2 Names of Countries](#)

[TABLE 11-3 Common Hotel Amenities](#)

[TABLE 11-4 Information to Know When You Check into a Hotel](#)

[TABLE 11-5 Looking for Locations](#)

[TABLE 11-6 Giving and Understanding Directions](#)

## **Chapter 13**

[TABLE 13-1 Looking at Hebrew Prepositions](#)

## **Chapter 14**

[TABLE 14-1 Helpful Words to Use with a Mechanic](#)

[TABLE 14-2 Body Parts](#)

## **Chapter 17**

[TABLE 17-1 Checking Out Biblical Word Order](#)

[TABLE 17-2 Looking at Biblical Verbs](#)

# **List of Illustrations**

## **Chapter 15**

[FIGURE 15-1: The expulsion of the Jews.](#)

[FIGURE 15-2: The Pale of Settlement.](#)

[FIGURE 15-3: The Middle East under Ottoman control.](#)

[FIGURE 15-4: Israel in 1948.](#)

# 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.) בְּהַצְלָחָה!  
(beh-hahtz-lah-**h**ah; *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](http://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 loooove [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](#).



**Part 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”.

# Chapter 1

## You Already Know Some Hebrew

---

### 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
- 

*בָּרוּךְ הַבָּא!* (*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 *קוֹטְהָשׁ* (*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 *קִינָמוֹן* (*kee-*

nah-*mohn*), which appears in the biblical book The Song of Songs? The English word *dilute* may derive from the Hebrew word דַּל (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-*chok*), 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 הלפון (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 **הַאָקָדֶמְיָה 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* (תַּעֲשִׂייהַטְעֵלִית; tah-ah see-yat ee-leet) and *start-up company* (חֵבְרַת הַזְנָק; hehv-raht hehz-nehk), *surfboard* (גִּלְשָׁן; gahl-shan), *jet lag* (יַעֲפָת; yah-eh-feht), and even — when you've had a few too many — *hangover* (חִמְמָרְמָרְת; hah-mahr-moh-reht).

Other timely words include **נְגִישׁוּת** (neh-shee-goot; *affordability*), **חֲרִיגְנוּת** (hahr-ree-gahn-oot; *exceptionalism*), **נְתוּבֵי עֵתֵק** (nee-too-nee ah-tahk; *big data*), **תַּג הַקְּבָצָה** (tahg-hahk -bahk-tzah; *hashtag*), **הַעֲלָמַת זְהוּת** (heet-ahm-aht zah-hoot; *anonymization*), **עִילוּת** (ee-loot; *gentrification*), **אַחְוָה** (ah-vah; *solidarity*), and **תַּצְלוּם מַסָּךְ** (tahtz-loom mahh 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 פֶּלֶא-פֹּנוֹן *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](http://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