

PRAYERBOOK
HEBREW

The Easy Way

Third Edition

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The prayerbook, or *Siddur*, is the most widely used book in Jewish life. Although most prayerbooks found in English-speaking countries include an English translation, nothing can replace the immediate experience of reading Hebrew. *Prayerbook Hebrew the Easy Way* teaches adult beginners how to translate and understand Hebrew prayers.

This book is appropriate for students who can read Hebrew words but do not know what they mean. Students who cannot read Hebrew, or can do so only with great difficulty, should review the Hebrew alphabet and vowels before beginning.

Prayerbook Hebrew the Easy Way is an introduction to Hebrew grammar. It teaches simple, regular forms of Hebrew verbs, nouns, adjectives, and prepositions. By focusing on basic constructions, *Prayerbook Hebrew* allows students to master essential Hebrew expressions with confidence and ease.

Each of the twenty-one lessons in *Prayerbook Hebrew* includes an oral review exercise, a vocabulary list, a short grammar lesson, written exercises, and a Hebrew prayer. Oral review exercises reinforce the grammar and vocabulary from previous lessons, while written exercises provide enough practice for students to gain a complete understanding of the ideas and vocabulary words introduced in each chapter. *Prayerbook Hebrew* teaches students 183 vocabulary words, based on frequency in prayerbooks from several Jewish traditions. Grammar lessons are clearly explained in everyday language and illustrated with examples and easy-to-read charts.

A selection from the prayerbook is included in each chapter so that students may learn Hebrew grammar and vocabulary

through direct interaction with the text. Many chapters include additional excerpts from prayers in the exercises. Please note that the translations we offer for these prayers are not gender inclusive. We recognize that bias-free writing is the current standard and that some synagogues and temples use prayerbooks with gender-inclusive translations. We do not intend for our language to be interpreted as a political or religious statement. However, the Hebrew language marks all words with grammatical gender, and because *Prayerbook Hebrew the Easy Way* is a learning tool, we have preserved gender assignments in English translations. As a reader and interpreter of prayers, you may choose to make the language more inclusive.

In an effort to make *Prayerbook Hebrew the Easy Way* as helpful as possible, a few changes have been made to the second edition. The most notable change is the addition of an answer key to the back of this text. We have also included the translations for the prayer selections that appear in chapters 9-14. We encourage students to complete and check all exercises.

We hope that studying prayerbook Hebrew will be a rewarding experience, and that your new abilities will give you insights into the wisdom and traditions of our people.

פֶּתַח לִבִּי לְהַבִּין דַּעַת וְחָכְמָה.

Open my heart to wisdom and understanding.

from the *Tachanun*

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The Name

Jewish tradition teaches that the name of God be given respect. More traditional Jews will not print a Hebrew name of God except in holy books like the Bible or the prayerbook, nor will they say a Hebrew name of God except in prayer or perhaps in religious study.

This book prints some of the Hebrew names of God, allowing you to see the prayers as they appear in prayerbooks. The Hebrew names of God are used in this book only when prayers are quoted. The Hebrew names of God are never used in exercises or in explanations of grammar.

This book does not print the holiest of the names of God, the Tetragrammaton (יהוה and יהוה and יהוה and יהוה). The prayers in this book follow the convention of most prayerbooks, in which יהוה appears in place of the Tetragrammaton. One never pronounces either the Tetragrammaton or the name יהוה. In prayer, יהוה should be read as if it were the name יהוה, translated “Lord”. When not praying, more traditional Jews read יהוה or יהוה as יהוה (“the name”). Also, though the words יהוה and יהוה sometimes refer to pagan gods, more often they are names of the God of Israel. More traditional Jews, when not praying, pronounce these names יהוה and יהוה.

These are the names of God you will find in this book:

יהוה יהוה יהוה יהוה יהוה

The Noun Sentence

Every language has its own way of saying things. As you begin to study Hebrew, you need to be aware that it is different from English in many ways. It is not enough to be able to translate individual words from Hebrew into English. You must also understand how these words are arranged in sentences. A sentence that makes sense in Hebrew may not make sense when translated literally into English. This book will teach you both: the English meanings of individual Hebrew words, and the ways the Hebrew words are arranged to make proper Hebrew sentences. This book will show time after time how the same thought is expressed one way in Hebrew and a different way in English.

When you begin using this book, you should already be able to read simple Hebrew words. If you cannot read simple Hebrew words, or if you can only read with great difficulty, you will need to learn or review the Hebrew alphabet and vowels before you begin this book.

Vocabulary

father	אָב
one	אֶחָד
I	אֲנִי
you	אַתָּה
he, it	הוּא
this	זֶה
Israel	יִשְׂרָאֵל
king	מֶלֶךְ
Moses	מֹשֶׁה
nation, people	עַם

In each chapter, we will introduce no more than ten new vocabulary words. These words need to be learned.

The Noun Sentence

In this chapter you will learn about the simplest type of sentence in Hebrew: the noun sentence. The noun sentence is a very good example of how Hebrew and English are different. Look at the following simple English sentences.

You are a king.

I am a father.

Moses is a king.

In English each of these sentences is three or four words long. In Hebrew, each of these sentences would use only two words. Remember that Hebrew sentences are read from right to left.

You are a king. אַתָּה מֶלֶךְ.

I am a father. אֲנִי אָב.

Moses is a king. מֹשֶׁה מֶלֶךְ.

These are complete Hebrew sentences. As you can see, they contain no word for is, am, or are. These words do not exist in Hebrew and must be added in an English translation.

You will also notice that the word a does not appear in the Hebrew sentences. In Hebrew there is no word for a or an. These words, too, must be added in an English translation.

You are a father. אַתָּה אָב.

I am a king. אֲנִי מֶלֶךְ.

Israel is a people. יִשְׂרָאֵל עַם.

This is Moses. זֶה מֹשֶׁה.

This is all you need to know to be able to form simple Hebrew sentences. Many of the sentences in your prayerbook are noun sentences.

Exercises

1. Translate these Hebrew noun sentences into English.

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|--------------------|--------------------|
| 7. מֹשֶׁה מֶלֶךְ. | 1. אֲנִי מֹשֶׁה. |
| 8. אֲנִי אָב. | 2. אֵתָהּ מֶלֶךְ. |
| 9. זֶה יִשְׂרָאֵל. | 3. הוּא אָב. |
| 10. הוּא מֶלֶךְ. | 4. זֶה עַם. |
| 11. זֶה מֹשֶׁה. | 5. הוּא אָחַד. |
| 12. אֵתָהּ אָב. | 6. יִשְׂרָאֵל עַם. |

2. Translate these English noun sentences into Hebrew.

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|------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. You are a father. | 5. This is Moses. |
| 2. This is a people. | 6. Moses is a king. |
| 3. I am a king. | 7. A nation is one. |
| 4. Israel is a nation. | 8. I am he. |

3. Fill in the blanks to make your own noun sentences.

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|-------------------|------------------|
| 4. אָב _____ . | 1. אֲנִי _____ . |
| 5. אֵתָהּ _____ . | 2. עַם _____ . |
| 6. זֶה _____ . | 3. הוּא _____ . |

4. See how many Chapter One vocabulary words you can find in your prayerbook.

