
TEACH YOURSELF
TO
READ
HEBREW

REVISED EDITION

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INTRODUCTION

Teach Yourself to Read Hebrew is designed specifically for the needs of adult beginners. Hebrew letters and vowels are presented simply, enabling students to advance rapidly. Students begin with single sounds, and then progress to syllables, whole words, and sentences from well-known prayers. Exercises included with each chapter provide opportunities to practice reading and writing skills.

Teach Yourself to Read Hebrew is divided into ten lessons, and a set of cassette tapes is available as a companion to the book. The tapes guide students through all material presented in the book, providing access to correct pronunciation as students progress. When used together, *Teach Yourself to Read Hebrew* and the cassette tapes offer a complete audiovisual introduction to reading Hebrew.

Teach Yourself to Read Hebrew can be used three different ways:

1. It may be used by a teacher or tutor. This is probably the most effective way to learn from the text; students are certain to learn correct pronunciation, and a teacher can give students additional guidance and motivation.
2. It may be used with the companion tape set available from EKS Publishing Company. The tape set will help students pronounce letters, vowels, syllables and words, serving as a teacher that is available at all times.

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3. It may be used by itself. Without the aid of a teacher or the cassettes, learning to read Hebrew can be difficult. However, *Teach Yourself to Read Hebrew* clearly explains how to pronounce each Hebrew sound using examples from English, making it a self-teaching book.

This book teaches the Sephardic, or Middle-Eastern, pronunciation of Hebrew. Sephardic pronunciation is officially accepted by the State of Israel and is used all over the United States.

Once students know how to pronounce Hebrew, they may wish to learn how to translate it. EKS Publishing Company has several textbooks and teaching aids designed to teach Biblical and Prayer-book Hebrew to adult beginners. Call or write EKS Publishing for a free catalog.

There are several major differences between English and Hebrew.

ENGLISH

1. English is read from left to right.
2. In the English alphabet, there are 26 letters: some are vowels (a, e, i, o, u), and some are consonants (b, c, d, g, etc.).
3. English has both capital and small letters.
4. English letters are never written differently when they appear at the end of a word.
5. It is impossible to learn to read English without knowing the meaning of words, because letters and letter combinations can be pronounced in so many different ways. Examples: the letter **c** in the words **cat** and **circle**, and the letters **ough** in the words **through** and **cough**.

HEBREW

1. Hebrew is read from right to left.
2. In the Hebrew alphabet, there are 22 letters, all of which are consonants. Vowels are dots and dashes added below and beside the consonants.
3. The Hebrew alphabet has no capital letters.
4. Five Hebrew letters have a different form when they appear at the end of a word.
5. Hebrew consonants and vowels are *always* pronounced the same. Therefore it is possible to learn to read Hebrew without knowing the meaning of words.

LESSON 1

ת ש ב

This lesson is an introduction to Hebrew consonants and vowels. You will learn three Hebrew letters, and one Hebrew vowel sound. By the end of this lesson, you will be able to read an important word in Hebrew. In Lesson 2, we will begin to introduce the rest of the Hebrew letters in alphabetical order.

In Hebrew, there are 22 different consonants. Three of these consonants are shown above. They are:

B as in **Boy** ב

SH as in **SHape** ש

T as in **Tall** ת

Hebrew vowels are shown by adding dots and dashes below or beside Hebrew consonants. Two Hebrew vowels are shown below. They are both added below Hebrew consonants, and are both pronounced in the same way. The X represents any Hebrew consonant.

a as in **yacht** X̣ X̣̣

Words from Our Tradition

In each lesson we will give you translations of several words that you have read in the final exercise. You do not need to learn these words, although you may recognize some of them. They are included for your enjoyment and interest.

comes	=	בָּא	Sabbath	=	שַׁבָּת
man	=	אִישׁ	father	=	אָב
daughter	=	בַּת	my father	=	אָבִי

Learning Hints and Suggestions

We suggest that you use flashcards while learning Hebrew letters and vowels. These are available from EKS Publishing, or you may make your own. Write the letters and vowels that you have learned on index cards. As you learn new letters and vowels, make flashcards for them too. Flashcards can be used in a number of ways. Here are a few suggestions:

1. See how many combinations of letters and vowels you can create. Read each one.
2. Work with another person, making combinations and asking one another to read them.
3. See how many English words you can create with the letters and vowels you have. (See exercise 6 on page 13.)

Hebrew letters sometimes have dots in the middle, but there are only a few cases in which the dot will change the way a letter is pronounced. You have already learned one of these. We will point out the rest in later chapters.