

### **SHALOM!**

You are about to make use of a guide which will help you get along in Israel where the main language is Hebrew. Although many people speak English as well as other languages, your stay in Israel will be much more exciting and meaningful if you can understand and speak a bit of Hebrew. People will appreciate your efforts and be even friendlier than their normal friendly selves.

Perhaps the first point that strikes the newcomer to Hebrew is the fact that it is written from right to left. In addition, most of the vowels are represented by dashes and dots below and above the letters, and the vowels are usually left out. People read Hebrew primarily from the consonants.

Hebrew has fewer vowels than English. Here are the symbols that have

been used in this guide:

/ee/	as in <i>meet</i> .	Sometimes /i/ is used to show that the vowel is slightly shorter in length.
/u/	as in <i>put</i> .	
/o/	as in <i>fort</i> .	
/e/	as in <i>let</i> .	Sometimes /ei/ is used to show that the vowel is somewhat longer as the first vowel in 'late'.
/a/	as in <i>far</i> .	
/ʔ/		is used to indicate a very short semi-vowel almost like the vowel in the word 'but'.

Concerning the consonants, there are some Hebrew consonants which do not exist in English. The most common is the sound at the end of the Scots' *loch* which is represented by the letter /ɣ/ in this guide. Another

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unusual sound is represented by /tz/ and appears as the last sound in the plural *cats*. In Hebrew this sound appears at the beginning and in the middle of words, not just at the end. Hebrew also has combinations of sounds which do not appear in English, such as /km/, /kn/, /ps/, etc.

When you read the Hebrew words in Latin letters, you should remember that the spelling does not follow English spelling rules. Do not try to pronounce the words as you might in English. Follow the rules of this guide, and listen to the accompanying recording. They will also tell you where to put the stress or accent in each word. Hebrew very often stresses the end of the word.

The grammar of Hebrew has several features that English does not have. There are special endings on nouns, adjectives and verbs to show singular and plural as well as masculine and feminine words. All nouns are either masculine or feminine. There is no such thing as the "it" in English. The adjectives come after the nouns just as in many other languages, and they change their endings to match the nouns they are describing.

Functional words like 'and', 'from', 'to', 'in', 'the', 'that' and 'when' are often attached to the word which follows. For example, the word *kartees* means ticket, but the word *ha'kartees* means 'the ticket'.

In connection with vocabulary, the words and phrases used in this guide were chosen on the basis of their frequency and usefulness. Words were chosen according to the needs of different kinds of visitors to Israel. Not all words are equally useful to everyone, so make use of what you need. Some of the vocabulary is repeated under different headings. This is to make it easier for you to find what you need based on the situation you are in. It may also be the case that words have many different applications in which the meanings are slightly different.

There are quite a few phrases in this guide that you might not actually say, but someone else might say them to you, and you would want to understand them. An example might be questions that a doctor asks a patient.

A final point to remember is that this book is not a complete description

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of Hebrew. It is a guide and we have included what we believe to be most practical. For example, we have not always included both the feminine and masculine forms but only the one which would be more likely to be heard in a particular situation. Whenever we did mention both forms for example *ata / at* (you), the first will be the masculine form, and the second will be the feminine form.

Please note that the tags (') were added merely to facilitate pronunciation; they do not represent any formal system of dividing words into syllables

Enjoy your stay in Israel and have fun speaking Hebrew!

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