

**שיעורים בעברית  
שלב אי**

**Lessons  
in  
Modern  
Hebrew**

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**Level I**

**Ann Arbor The University of Michigan Press**

## PREFACE

The writing of this book was a direct result of a need for a comprehensive textbook in Modern Hebrew to be used in instruction at university and other adult language classes outside of Israel. The materials presented in this book aim at maintaining a level of linguistic and cultural content commensurate with the background and ability of its intended users. The guidelines for learning and the study materials are especially designed for the English speaking student who wants to acquire an active control of Modern Israeli Hebrew (MIH).

MIH as a language of both written and oral communications is the target language. This needs emphasis as there is often a tendency to present beginning students with more than one level of language. Hebrew has a long history, and as a result it can be classified according to its many historical stages of development, each of which has its own unique characteristics. Thus Biblical Hebrew, Mishnaic Hebrew, Medieval Literary Hebrew, 18th and 19th century early Modern Hebrew, and Modern Israeli Hebrew, all have many unifying features, but can also be distinguished from one another as sub-languages within one language grouping. While MIH exhibits many of the characteristics of the earlier stages of Hebrew, it has developed and continues to develop a character of its own. What is "correct" (normative) for Biblical Hebrew, is not necessarily acceptable in MIH. The differences encompass all areas of language: vocabulary usage, morphological and syntactic structures, and phonological features. Modern Hebrew itself has more than one stage of development, and thus the Hebrew used for writing literature in the 19th century in Europe is not the same Hebrew employed by writers in Israel today, and certainly not the same as the spoken medium of today.

For the purpose of language study it is not only necessary to define

what stage of Hebrew is being taught, but also the style of MIH being presented. Every language has several distinctive styles and registers which are used by different social, geographical or ethnic groups, and at different social circumstances. Speech communities can thus be defined by such criteria as age, socio-economic classes or special environments. The same speaker may employ different styles of language for different activities: a formal style for delivering a speech, an informal style while talking to friends, and children's language while addressing one's baby. In MIH the geographical factor is not one of consequence, as the various parts of Israel have not developed noticeable dialects. However, it is possible to distinguish such styles as: formal address language, street language, army slang, children's language, the language of the communication media, modern fiction style, and standard spoken Hebrew. In the spoken language, while no geographical dialects have emerged, there are certain characteristics of speech which distinguish communities of speakers by their country of origin outside of Israel.

The mixed style of language presented in this text is the communication language and the standard spoken language. Substandard spoken dialects such as street language or children's language are avoided. Literary Hebrew as used in contemporary works of fiction, is presented in the later reading selections, especially in Level II, when the selections themselves suggest the necessity for such a style.

Lessons in Modern Hebrew is a series of two volumes and is designed to cover the elementary as well as the intermediate stages of MIH instruction. Level I is designed to cover the elementary stage of instruction, while Level II provides instruction for the intermediate level. While no specific time is assigned for covering the materials in these books, each one can be completed in one academic year.

Lessons in Modern Hebrew, Level I contains the following subject matters: an introduction to reading, writing and pronunciation of MIH, a discussion of the sound system, major verb conjugation patterns (not including the passive conjugations of pu'al and huf'al which are included in Level II); nouns and prepositions and their inflections; the root and

pattern system; and many of the major syntactic structures of MIH.

The student is given explanations of grammar and vocabulary in English, which are followed by drills and exercises to reinforce the new concepts. The drills are highly controlled in order to establish command over new patterns and structures. They are followed by less controlled exercises (in the same lesson) in order to give the student ample opportunity to use the new vocabulary items and structures for individual expression.

All four language skills are presented simultaneously: (1) comprehension of written and oral materials; (2) reading of unvoiced texts; (3) writing of directed sentences and paragraphs as well as free compositions and (4) speaking. Speaking serves not only for communication but to test the student's ability to produce correct sentences instantaneously as well as check on his control of vocabulary. Extensive readings without vowels demand that the student know his vocabulary well as well as recognize grammatical patterns. Writing encourages correct spelling as well as building correct sentences and experimenting with new vocabulary items and structures.

There is emphasis on both audio-lingual intensive drills in class or with the use of tapes, as well as on the cognitive approach to language learning. The latter offers the students explanations, contrastive analysis and makes extensive use of such exercises as translations from one language to the other. Because of the audio-lingual emphasis for teaching all four skills, and since the texts are unvocalized, there are tapes which accompany each lesson. The tapes constitute an integral part of the instructional materials, and greatly enhance correct pronunciation, reading competence, and control of new structures.

The Structure of the Book. The book contains an introduction, as well as twenty lessons. Sixteen lessons present new materials, while four lessons are review lessons. There is a Hebrew-English glossary at the end of the volume. A list of verbs used in the first volume is also included, containing verb forms in all tenses and moods, organized by pattern and root. An additional list of prepositions which appeared in the first volume, with their inflections, also appears at the end of the book. This is followed by an

appendix, which contains notes on MIH phonology and some rules of vocalization.

The Structure of the Lessons. The format of each of the sixteen lessons where new materials are presented is similar. Each lesson starts with a list of new vocabulary items. The vocabulary items may be bound morphemes, words, or idioms. The Hebrew listing is done in two columns. The first column presents the new items in their unvocalized form, while the second column provides the vocalization for the item. When nouns are presented the gender indication appears in the first column. The plural form is provided in the second column. If adjectives, nouns which refer to people, or verbs are presented, no gender indication is given. The singular masculine and the singular feminine forms are presented in both columns when the new item is a noun or an adjective. When verbs are given, the first column contains the vocalized forms of the verbs in tense, while the middle column contains the infinitive forms, often with the preposition which usually follows the particular verb. Equivalences in English are given in the third column.

Vocabulary notes are attached to the section dealing with new vocabulary items. These notes may provide explanations for a particularly problematical item, which can cause some confusion for the English speaking student. Or, beginning with Lesson 12, the vocabulary notes present the students with roots and some of their derivations, both in the noun and in the verb systems, as well as their usage in idiomatic expressions. These notes are meant to heighten the students' awareness and comprehension of the nature of roots and their relationships in the semantic system of MIH. These lists are not meant to be studied as new vocabulary items.

Basic Texts follow the introduction to vocabulary. Their function is to introduce the new vocabulary items as well as the new grammatical structures in context. Thus, they are included in a meaningful reading which can be used for drilling oral expression, comprehension and reading skills as well.

Most of the texts are organized around a specific topic. Choice of vocabulary is thus not only determined by lists of frequency but also by the topic of the text. The texts are not voweled, as it is felt that the

students must get used to the standard way in which texts of MIH are printed today in Israel. Occasionally, to avoid confusion, parts of individual words contain vowels. The texts contain both dialogues and reading passages. In Lessons in Modern Hebrew, Level II, all of the reading selections consist of passages rather than dialogues. All texts are recorded on tapes, and correct readings can be achieved by using the tapes which accompany the texts.

Grammar and Exercises. Several major grammar points are presented in each lesson. The structure is explained using many examples. The grammar notes are followed by drills and exercises, so that the students can immediately apply what they learn. The drills contained in the lesson are designed to teach the new constructions by having the students "overlearn" them. These activities can take place in class and outside of class, using tapes. There are several types of such drills: repetition drills, substitution drills and transformation drills. The written exercises, on the other hand, contain problem solving assignments as well as creative activities. Included are translations, completion of sentences, choice of items within sentences, as well as suggestions for compositions.

Additional texts and activities are provided at the end of each lesson in order to review and expand the knowledge gained by the student in that particular lesson.

The review lessons at the end of each segment of four lessons are extremely important, as they give the students an opportunity to review both grammar and vocabulary, and to integrate what they have learned. While not all vocabulary can be included, but there is an attempt to use many of the less frequently used items.

The author of this book has consulted frequency lists accumulated by Balgur, Rieger and Haramati, as well as the Hebrew-English dictionaries of Alcalay and Levenston-Sivan.

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An appendix at the end of Level I includes a description of the sound system in MIH, and some rules of vocalization. A Hebrew-English glossary can also be found, following the appendix, in which the Hebrew items appear in unvoweled form.

Tapes are provided for each lesson and are an integral part of the course. They supply the students with correct vowels necessary for reading the text and reinforce correct pronunciation, as well as develop listening skills. The tape for each lesson contains the vocabulary list, basic and additional texts, some tables, and all drills presented in the grammar section.

I would like to thank Professors Arnold Band of the Near Eastern Studies Department at UCLA and Professor Ernest McCarus of the Near Eastern Studies Department at the University of Michigan for their help and encouragement. Special thanks are due to the teaching fellows in the Modern Hebrew classes at the University of Michigan for their many suggestions. In particular I appreciated the countless efforts of Oded Borowski, Deborah Lanyi, Miri Livnat and Ziona Kopelovich-Hanash.