

MI-POH LE-SHAM: HOVERET HA'ASHARA LE"IVRIT MIN HA-HATHALAH". Esti Simons. Jerusalem: Akademon, 2016. 136 pp.

Mi-poh le-sham, by Esti Simons, is a collection of exercises meant to accompany the first volume of the widely-used and highly successful textbook, *Ivrit min ha-hathalah*. Teachers who have used that textbook in their classrooms have long felt the need for such a supplement. *Mi-poh le-sham* fills the need admirably.

The book is arranged according to the chapters in *Ivrit min ha-hathalah*, from the initial unit that teaches the Hebrew alphabet through Lesson 28. It offers a set of exercises for each chapter, including brief reading passages for enrichment, vocabulary reviews, cloze vocabulary exercises with a word bank, drills to review verbs (designed to be done in pairs), completion exercises, and transposition drills. Some exercises require specific answers; others (mostly involving letter or note writing or composition on themes related to the chapter) are entirely open.

The exercises in *Mi-poh le-sham* are noteworthy first of all for their wide variety, both of form and of content. They include numerous and diverse opportunities for beginners to practice writing in cursive script, along with structured elementary drills in transformation from singular to plural, verb conjugations, noun-adjective agreement, use of numbers, and question formation. Open-ended, less structured exercises are also introduced at a fairly elementary stage: as early as page 20 students are invited to compose a response to a letter from a mother complaining about her son's lack of communication. Among other things that letter makes reference to correspondence by Skype, indicating that the book's cultural references are current.

Indeed, like *Ivrit min ha-hathalah*, *Mi-poh le-sham* stands out for its authentic Israeli cultural feel. This quality is noticeable not only in its use of contemporary language but also in its evocation of recent events, including the 2011 social protest movement, which is reflected on page 21 in a text entitled "Living in a Tent" (*garim be-ohel*). In only 17 lines of an imagined dialogue between homeless students and news reporters, the author manages to convey directly and forcefully the frustration of young people whose education has enabled them to obtain jobs but not to be compensated

sufficiently to acquire an apartment. The text is accompanied by a photograph of the tent camp that was set up on Rothschild Boulevard in Tel Aviv.

The contemporary cultural context is also employed heavily in drilling vocabulary. On page 28, for example, students are asked about whether the furniture items that they have learned to name would be found in the Museum of Bedouin Life in Rahat, near Beersheva. In this fashion students are exposed to some of the variety of Israel's peoples and their ways of life.

Mi-poh le-sham continues throughout to familiarize students with the local culture of the place whose language they are learning. This aim is realized, among other ways, through cloze exercises, like the one on page 34 about the Bible Lands Museum in Jerusalem, or the one on page 47 that introduces students to the iconic literary and cinematic figure Salah Shabbati and to the problems associated with immigrant integration in the 1960s. On page 89 a text exemplifying use of the past tense allows students to meet the writer Amos Oz. The text is truly remarkable for its ability to present a complex personality in language accessible to a beginning learner.

Another praiseworthy feature of the book is its attention to differences in word usage between Hebrew and other languages. Particularly notable in this regard is an exercise on page 38 that asks students to make distinctions between verbs that beginning users often confuse, such as *yada/hikir*, *amar/diber*, and *holekh/nose'a*.

Ronit Engel
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