

I'm an addict. I admit it. I have bought every Hebrew book on the market that discusses Israeli-Hebrew slang, idiomatic expressions, philological examinations, and aphorisms. So I was thrilled when Tzivonim Publishing recently unveiled a new book for my collection, *A Moment of Hebrew* by Ruth Almagor-Ramon (NIS 120).

The oversized all-Hebrew book, is a printed rendition of 300 radio broadcasts of the long-running popular radio show of the same name. In the spirit of Avshalom Koor, the on-going radio broadcast succeeds in delving into the Hebrew language in 90 seconds or less.

Each entry in the book is no longer than a paragraph and examines two very closely related Hebrew words. Entries can cover a variety of interesting aspects: the subtle nuances of synonyms, how a biblical word became bastardized, and common mistakes in pronunciation and in usage, such as using a verb with an incorrect governed preposition.

For those people who read the words "governed preposition" and it sounded like a bullet whistling past their ears, and for those people who find acquiring a second language to be as pleasant as eating a mango without having dental floss readily available: not to worry. *A Moment of Hebrew* never mentions the word grammar or "governed preposition" and the cartoon-like illustrations and graphics make it a fun read.

If you are reading this review I assume you're a native English speaker and there are times you feel frustrated at your inability to express an idea in Hebrew. But as

the saying goes, "*Lekol makah yesh trifah*" – for every malady there is a remedy. For immigrants, it is *A Moment of Hebrew*.

I CONFESS TO feeling a perverse sense of joy when correcting a sabra's Hebrew. I had just finished reading entry 44, in *A Moment of Hebrew* that explained the difference between the Hebrew words, *shehiya* and *shahoot*. Both words have the same root, and mean something akin to 'waiting around for a period of time.' But *shahoot* means "a specific amount of time to finish a project" while *shehiya* means a "period of time in which you stayed somewhere."

Two hours later my friend Galit, a sabarit, asked me how was my *shahoot* abroad. A smirk spread across my face as I told her: "It's *shehiya*."

The book's foibles are few. The print comes off easily; when I underlined sentences the pressure of the pencil forced the letters on the flip side of the page to come off on the page behind it. Also, vowels are slightly problematic. The author had the foresight and goodwill to insert vowels for critical words whose pronunciations were ambiguous. But for some reason she didn't feel compelled to put vowels under all the letters and it left people like me, a native English speaker, in doubt as to the correct pronunciation.

A Moment of Hebrew is a *neches zon barzel* (invaluable) for anyone who wants to feel uninhibited in Hebrew. It is a handsome book that makes learning modern-Hebrew fun and would make a great gift.

– Robby Berman

Hebrew book briefs