

Laugh and Learn Hebrew

By Doris Strub Epstein

For those of us struggling for years to learn Hebrew, there comes a delightful new aid. A new book, "Hilarious Hebrew", is truly what it claims to be - "a fun and fast way to learn the language".

The book consists of funny illustrations with a descriptive sentence below embedded with a Hebrew word. For instance, we see a grinning bear in a bathing suit diving into a pool. The text reads: "The bear wanted a swim, so it dove into the pool." The Hebrew word for bear is *dov*.

"The fastest car in the world belongs to Barack Obama. It goes like lightning." *Barak* means lightning. Two men are shaking hands. The caption reads, "They shook hands at the market." *Shook* is the Hebrew word for market. "The actor Tom Selleck loves his beet-root". The Hebrew word for a beet is *select*.

The book is 192 pages with 16 chapters and 235 sentences. Co-authors of the book are Yael Breuer and Eyal Shavit, both Israelis living in Brighton, England. Yael was a counsellor in 1986 at Camp Northland. She was in Toronto recently visiting friends and since her brother and his family live in Montreal, "I visit Canada regularly so it's nice to know I could have some involvement in teaching Hebrew to the local community."

Yael, who has been teaching Hebrew for over 20 years, said: "This kind of started off like a joke. I already had a list of about 20 of these sentences that I was using because they always added some laughter to the class and people remembered the words that way".

The idea triggered the imagination of her



Israeli friend, musician Eyal Shavit, and he began sending her his own funny phrases. "We were texting each other sentences to make each other laugh. After a while, we had hundreds of them," Yael said. Suddenly a fun activity became an actual project.

They decided to publish the book themselves and spent over a year compiling the manuscript. The humorous illustrations were

done by graphic artist Aubrey Smith. "Aubrey is not Jewish," Yael said, "but as he made the illustrations he started to learn some Hebrew."

Journalist Julie Burchill is quoted in the book's blurb: "Even a dummy like me, who has a Hebrew reading age of four to five after five years of trying, can make sense of these gorgeous foolproof lessons."

"Learning a language is hard work," said Yael. "This doesn't replace grammar. It's just another dimension that makes the process more enjoyable."

I can't wait for "Hilarious Hebrew 2".

The book is available online at www.hilarioushebrew.com and at www.amazon.com. It can also be picked up at Harbord Bakery. The cost is \$14.99.