

Episode 2 - My Hebrew Journey

Hello everyone and welcome to the new episode of the podcast Yalla: Learning Hebrew with Steph. In this episode, I want to talk a little bit about myself and my Hebrew learning journey to date.

Let's start. My name is Steph, I am 28 years old and I live in England. Currently, I live in the city Swindon with my husband, Alon, and my dog, Sheena. We met 5 years ago when we were both living in Berlin. We both lived there for 3 years. I was studying for my Master's degree and he was working for ELAL Airlines, an Israeli airline company. Now I work at Spotify as a Data Scientist. I wanted to start this podcast as a fun project to do in my spare time.

Let's talk about my Hebrew journey. Why did I want to learn Hebrew? Of course the main reason is because of Alon. I wanted to be able to speak with him in his Native language, speak with his family when we visit and to get a better understanding of his culture. I really believe that the way we think depends on the language that we speak, and learning someone's language can teach you a lot about a person. Personally, I always like learning something new and enjoy the challenge of learning a new language.

Before I started learning Hebrew, I was learning German while living in Berlin. It is funny because I thought that German was a really hard language because of the grammar and the pronunciation. But now that I am learning Hebrew, I think that German is actually an easier language. My experience with German has helped me with learning Hebrew. It taught me a lot about how I learn best, like how important it is to practise every day and which techniques work the best for me. For example, when I was learning German, I found that having a routine and being surrounded by the language helped me a lot. Of course when I lived in Berlin, this was easier but I still try to use similar techniques to improve my Hebrew.

I started to learn Hebrew 2 years ago and in the beginning I did not know where to start. Alon would teach me some words and phrases or I would try with duolingo but I wanted something more serious. So I found a private tutor on the platform Preply and this is when I started to see real progress. Still now, I have weekly classes with my tutor. In our lessons we practise speaking while learning new grammar. One thing I really like about my tutor is that after each class, he gives me homework to complete during the week and I send it back and we talk about it in the next class. If you can afford it and have the time, I really recommend getting a private tutor, especially in the beginning.

At the beginning, I remember that I struggled a lot with the sounds and pronunciation of words and how all of the words sounded the same to me. This made it really difficult for me to remember the new words that I learned as they would all get mixed in my head. I still find this hard today but of course over time this has gotten easier. Methods that I found that help me to learn new words are flashcards and another method that is called Spaced Repetition. With spaced repetition, you learn something new, for example a new word and in the beginning you look at the word every time you don't remember it and then with time you start to get used to the word and look at it less. In English, this is called Spaced Repetition and I use the application 'Anki Pro', it is very good for this.

As I continued and progressed, my love for the language grew. I started to understand parts of conversation whenever we went to Israel or Alon spoke on the phone and this gave me more motivation to keep learning. It is now something I want to do every day and it is a big part of my routine. I learnt that It's better to do a little every day than to do a lot all at once and then not do anything for a long time - consistency is key!

So where am I now in my Hebrew learning journey? I'd say I'm at an intermediate level. I can hold conversations and read some books and articles. At the moment, I focus my Hebrew learning on consuming as much content in Hebrew as possible. I do this by listening to podcasts, reading books or watching tv shows. Hopefully, I will soon be a more advanced level. My future goals include speaking fluently, reading more Hebrew books and of course using the language in real-life situations and I hope that this podcast will help with that.

In another episode, I will talk about my recommendations for books, podcasts and tv shows that I have found to be very helpful. In the meantime, if you have any recommendations that you would like to share, you are invited to send them to me or to leave a comment on the podcast website. I always love to find new resources and I am sure any other listeners to this podcast would love to hear them too.

Finally then, if I could give any advice to fellow Hebrew learners, or anyone learning a new language, it would be to enjoy the journey. Sometimes it is going to be hard and it will feel like you are not making any progress at all, but every step forward is progress. Don't be afraid to make mistakes — they're an important part of learning. And most importantly, find ways to make the learning process enjoyable. Whether it's through music, movies, or conversations, look for ways that don't feel like a chore but feel like fun.

That's it for today's episode! I hope sharing my Hebrew learning journey has been interesting and maybe even a bit inspiring for you. If you're on your own language learning journey, I'd love to hear about it! You are invited to send me an email or to leave a comment on the podcast website with your stories and tips. And of course, if you have any questions or topics you'd like me to cover in future episodes, let me know.

Thank you so much for listening to "Yalla: Learning Hebrew with Steph." Until next time, take care and keep learning!