

Numbers in Hebrew

Most Hebrew text today uses the digits 0, 1, 2, 3... 9 to represent numbers. However, religious or biblical text and calendars in Hebrew usually use the traditional form which uses Hebrew letters as numeric values.

For example; the number 1 is written with the first letter א. The second letter ב is 2, etc. up through ט for 9.

1	א	6	ו
2	ב	7	ז
3	ג	8	ח
4	ד	9	ט
5	ה	10	י

Beginning with the tenth letter י for 10, the next 9 letters advance in steps of 10. So the eleventh letter כ is 20, ל is 30, etc.

10	י	60	ס
20	כ	70	ע
30	ל	80	פ
40	מ	90	צ
50	נ	100	ק

Beginning with the number 11 (אב) multiple letters are used, e.g. $10 + 1 = 11$. The values of each letter are added together. Note that the position of the letter doesn't matter, although they are usually written from largest to smallest. Of course that means from right to left.

10	י	15	טו
11	יא	16	טז
12	יב	17	יז
13	יג	18	יח
14	יד	19	יט

Exception. The numbers 15 or 16, or those ending in 15 or 16, would be expected to be written as יה (yud-heh) (10+5) and יו (yud-vav) (10+6), but the letters יהוה spell out the name of God and for religious reasons יה and יו are not used. Instead, by convention, טו (9+6) and טז (9+7) are used.

The last four letters of the alephbet, ק, ר, ש and ת represent 100, 200, 300 and 400 respectively. So תשסד represents 764 (400 + 300 + 60 + 4).

100	ק	600	תר
200	ר	700	תש
300	ש	800	תת
400	ת	900	תתק
500	תק	1000	א'

Thousands are represented by the same letters as the unit values, with an appended '. For example, ה'רח = 5,280. A space often separates thousands, millions, etc. The pattern for numbers 1-999 is repeated for each thousand from 1,001- 999,999.

Representative numbers are included in the table:

18	יח	1,100	א'ק
36	לו	1,345	א'שמה
72	עב	2,000	ב'1
144	קמ"ד	2,478	ב'תעח
212	רי"ב	3,800	ש'תת
256	רנ"ו	4,356	ת'שנו
454	תנ"ד	5,767	ה'תשס"ז
512	תק"ב	43,560	מג'תס
715	תשט"ו	100,016	ק'טז
1024	א'כ"ד	115,789	קט"ו'תשפ"ט

When using letters for numbers, there is the possibility of confusion as to whether a string of letters is a word or a numerical value. Therefore, when numbers are used with text, " punctuation mark(s) are added to the letter group to indicate their numerical meaning. Single character numbers (numbers less than 10) add the punctuation character ' after the numeric character. Larger numbers insert the punctuation character ' before the last character in the number. For examples, י"ב eggs are in a dozen; תשס"ז (400+300+60+7=5767²) is the current year on the Hebrew calendar.

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1. It may be difficult to distinguish a number embedded in text (and therefore followed by ') that is less than 10, from several thousand of the same amount. They are both written as a single letter followed by ' (e.g. 'ה = 5 or 5,000).
 2. The 5000 is generally dropped on calendars and so the year 5767 (23 September 2006 - 12 September 2007) is written as 767 or תשס"ז.