

IN THE CLASSROOM: CASE STUDY

USING *SHALOM UVRACHAH* IN A ONE-DAY-A-WEEK HEBREW CLASS

Three years ago, Anne Lidsky had to figure out how to teach Hebrew to her 3rd and 4th- graders in *one* Hebrew session of 1½ hours per week—which sometimes includes a 20-30 minute prayer service or music. That left her with about an hour of Hebrew instruction. She needed to ensure that her students would be thoroughly familiar with all the letters and vowels before leaving *alef* class (3rd and 4th grades).



Dr. Anne Lidsky
RJE, Director of
Education at
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Anne, the Director of Education at Temple Jeremiah in Northfield, IL, selected *Shalom Uvrachah* to accomplish this task.

Anne chose *Shalom Uvrachah* for many reasons, among them the text’s many reading opportunities, its variety of exercises, and a modern, attractive layout. She notes that each lesson opener shows students the letters and vowels they already know, reinforcing their sense of mastery, and that the heritage vocabulary and pictures help students relate to the new letters.

Anne is experiencing great success using *Shalom Uvrachah* with such limited instructional time. She says, “With *Shalom Uvrachah*, we are able to complete the text in a year, introducing the children to all the letters and vowels. In most cases, their decoding skills are very strong and their Hebrew experience a positive one at the end of the school year.”

The success of *Shalom Uvrachah* at Temple Jeremiah is also due to the creative teaching techniques that the *alef* teacher, Joanie Siegel, employs. The key, Joanie finds, is to complete one lesson a week. There are 25 lessons in the book and 25–30 weeks in the school year. By planning ahead and pacing classes carefully, teachers can readily complete the book in a school year.

To encourage retention of the letters’ names, shapes, and sounds, teachers should provide mnemonic clues to help students remember the sound of each letter. Students won’t easily forget that *tav* has a “tiny toe,” *mem* looks like a “man on the mountain,” *bet* has a “belly button,” and *lamed* looks like “lightning.” The classes also have fun making up their own mnemonic clues.

Involving families in the learning process is also helpful. Teachers can call the home of an absent student and teach parents the mnemonic clue for the new letter. If the student has the textbook at home, the parents can teach him or her the new letter.

Below are eight more techniques teachers can employ to ensure that students successfully complete *Shalom Uvrachah* with just one Hebrew session per week. A complete listing of techniques to print out or forward to teachers is on the last page of this document.

1. Review material from the previous lesson at the beginning of each new lesson. Regular and ongoing review will help ensure retention of new information and drill new skills.



2. Assign 10–15 minutes Hebrew reading practice a night. Send home the textbook, a photocopied sheet from the *Family Companion*, or encourage students to review with *Shalom Uvrachah Interactive CD*. Have parents sign a homework sheet indicating that the assignment is complete, and how long their child spent doing it.
3. Consolidate two lessons if pressed for time. For example, teach the *hirik* (“ee” vowel) in Lesson 8 together with the *ayin* in Lesson 9.
4. Turn an activity in the book—for example, a Checkpoint—into a game. Students will review material *and* have fun at the same time.
5. Have students make their own set of Hebrew letter and vowel flash cards. Use the flash cards for in-class games and at-home practice. For an interactive family activity, suggest that students teach their parents the names and sounds of the letters and vowels. Kids will love it, and parents will learn a bit of Hebrew.
6. Bring in tutors to work one-on-one with students who require more assistance. This will allow progress with the remainder of the class. Try to choose empathetic as well as knowledgeable high school students. Youngsters can often relate best to them.
7. Pair or group students. Students of different ability can complete an activity together and review one another’s work. Work alone with individuals during that period.
8. Assess letter and vowel recognition at the end of the school year. Have students fill in the names and sounds of the letters, and the sounds of the vowels. Use the Diagnostic Hebrew Reading Test or create a customized diagnostic tool.

Anne Lidsky has the final word: “I have been Director of Education at Temple Jeremiah for 22 years, and we have used a variety of primers during the course of those years. *Shalom Uvrachah* is a favorite in our school.”



USING SHALOM UVRACHAH IN A ONE-DAY-A-WEEK HEBREW CLASS

Teachers can use the following techniques to help ensure strong decoding skills, to reinforce students' sense of mastery, *and* to successfully complete *Shalom Uvrachah* in one hour a week.

- **Plan to complete one lesson a week.** There are 25 lessons in the book and 25–30 weeks in the school year. By planning ahead and pacing classes carefully, you will readily complete the book in a school year.
- **Provide mnemonic clues to help students remember the sound of each letter.** Tell them that *tav* has a “tiny toe,” *mem* looks like a “man on the mountain,” *resh* is “rounded,” *hay* has a “hole,” *lamed* looks like “lightning,” and *kaf* has a “cough drop” in it. Have the class make up their own mnemonic clues. Drill them, and students won’t forget the sound each letter makes!
- **Review material from the previous lesson at the beginning of each new lesson.** Regular and ongoing review will help ensure retention of new information and drill new skills.
- **Assign 10–15 minutes Hebrew reading practice a night.** Send home the textbook, a photocopied sheet from the Family Companion, or encourage students to review with *Shalom Uvrachah Interactive CD*. Have parents sign a homework sheet indicating that the assignment is complete, and how long their child spent doing it.
- **Consolidate two lessons if pressed for time.** For example, teach the *hirik* (“ee” vowel) in Lesson 8 together with the *ayin* in Lesson 9.
- **Turn an activity in the book—for example, a Checkpoint—into a game.** Students will review material *and* have fun at the same time.
- **Have students make their own set of Hebrew letter and vowel flash cards.** Use the flash cards for in-class games and at-home practice. For an interactive family activity, suggest that students teach their parents the names and sounds of the letters and vowels. Kids will love it, and parents will learn a bit of Hebrew.
- **Bring in tutors to work one-on-one with students who require more assistance.** This will allow you to move forward with the remainder of the class. Try to choose empathetic as well as knowledgeable high school students. Youngsters can often relate best to them.
- **Pair or group students.** Students of different ability can complete an activity together and review one another’s work. Work alone with individuals during that period.
- **Call the home of an absent student.** Teach parents the mnemonic clue for the new letter. If the student has the textbook at home, the parents can teach him or her the new letter. Parents and students will respect you for your interest in them and for caring about each child’s progress. In addition, you’re making students accountable for their own learning.
- **Assess letter and vowel recognition at the end of the school year.** Have students fill in the names and sounds of the letters, and the sounds of the vowels. Use the Diagnostic Hebrew Reading Test or create your own diagnostic tool.
- **Expect the most from your students.** Keep the pace regular and the class moving ahead briskly, and set high standards. You may be happily surprised to see how your students meet up to your expectations.

