

The Gateways Hebrew Program:

A multi-sensory approach to language learning

The Gateways Hebrew program is a multi-sensory approach to Hebrew decoding and is designed to make the learning process accessible and intuitive for students with diverse abilities.

The program helps students make a connection between the way a letter looks and the way a letter sounds. To do this, students assign each letter a mnemonic trick and a visual cue. For example, the letter א has the mnemonic 'is **G**oing for the **G**oal,' and it is first presented to students appearing this way:



Students then color in a flash card so that it matches the example. In many classes, we also teach students movements that reinforce the mnemonic. For letter א, a teacher may bring in a ball and create a goal area in their classroom. When each student has a turn to go for the goal, they are prompted to say 'א.' This combination of hearing the mnemonic, seeing the visual cue, enacting the movement, and saying the sound assists students in making a connection between the way a letter looks and the way a letter sounds. This method is effective because the letters themselves provide clues that help students remember the sounds they make.

The Gateways method teaches Hebrew letters out of alphabetical order. This allows us to separate letters that are easily confused for each other, such as *shin* and *sin* or *bet* and *vet*. Students therefore learn one letter and master it before encountering the other letter several lessons later.

Questions and Answers about the Gateways Hebrew Program

How does Gateways use the Hebrew program in its classrooms?

During each B'nei Mitzvah program class, every student has a 1:1 tutor with whom they work for 45 minutes. They use a schedule to structure the time, and this lets the students know what to expect. Many students have token systems to help keep them motivated and focused during this time. Most of our students also take breaks as they are needed.



The students begin their weekly routine by using their illustrated flash cards to review the sounds and mnemonics for each letter. Students then read through a page of reading exercises that are written in a large print, clear font with wide spacing. This reading practice also allows their tutor to assess whether the student has mastered the previous lessons and is ready to learn new letters and vowels. If the student requires more time on their current lesson, they engage in more reading practice, often in the form of games such as Tic-Tac-Toe and Bingo. If a student is ready to move on, they learn the mnemonics and movements for new letters and vowels, and color in new flash cards.



How quickly can students learn Hebrew with this program?

The Gateways Hebrew program allows each student to learn at their own pace. Students only learn new letters when they are able to complete their reading exercises at a very high level of accuracy. This ensures that they have mastered the previous lessons and will not be overwhelmed by new information. There are a total of 31 lessons in our program, which means that it takes most students over a year to learn all of the letters and vowels.

Can students who do not read English learn how to read Hebrew?

Reading Hebrew is actually easier than reading English! This is because a letter or vowel in Hebrew always makes the same sound. This is not the case with English, where the sound a letter makes can change depending on where it is in a word and what letters are next to it. (For example, the letter *g* can make different sounds in the words *get*, *gem*, and *cough*.) Since Hebrew has almost no exceptions to the rules for how letters and vowels sound, students can find it significantly easier to decode.

Do all your students learn how to read Hebrew?

Although many of our students learn how to read Hebrew through the Gateways Hebrew program, it is not appropriate for all of our students. Students who use a sight-word program to learn how to read English often struggle to make the switch to a decoding program, and our Hebrew program is not recommended for these students. Additionally, some parents prefer that their children spend time focused on skills other than learning Hebrew.

How can I purchase this system for my school?

Many of the materials used at Gateways can be purchased through <http://www.cantoreducator.com/forsale/hiaf/>. These materials include blank sets of flash cards for students and instructors' sets of flash cards that list the mnemonic for each letter and show how the letter should look when it is colored in. These materials were originally developed to be used in conjunction with the *Zman Likro* workbooks (<https://store.behrmanhouse.com/index.php/z-man-likro-1-2-set.html>), and the reading exercises we use are adapted from these books. However, the flash cards can be used with any systematic reading curriculum.

For those instructors in the Boston area who are interested in learning how to implement the Gateways Hebrew program in their own schools, Gateways provides both beginner-level and advanced-level Hebrew trainings for area schools. **If you are outside the Boston area, please contact David Farbman at davidf@jgateways.org or at 617.630-9010 ext. 116 to discuss remote training options.**